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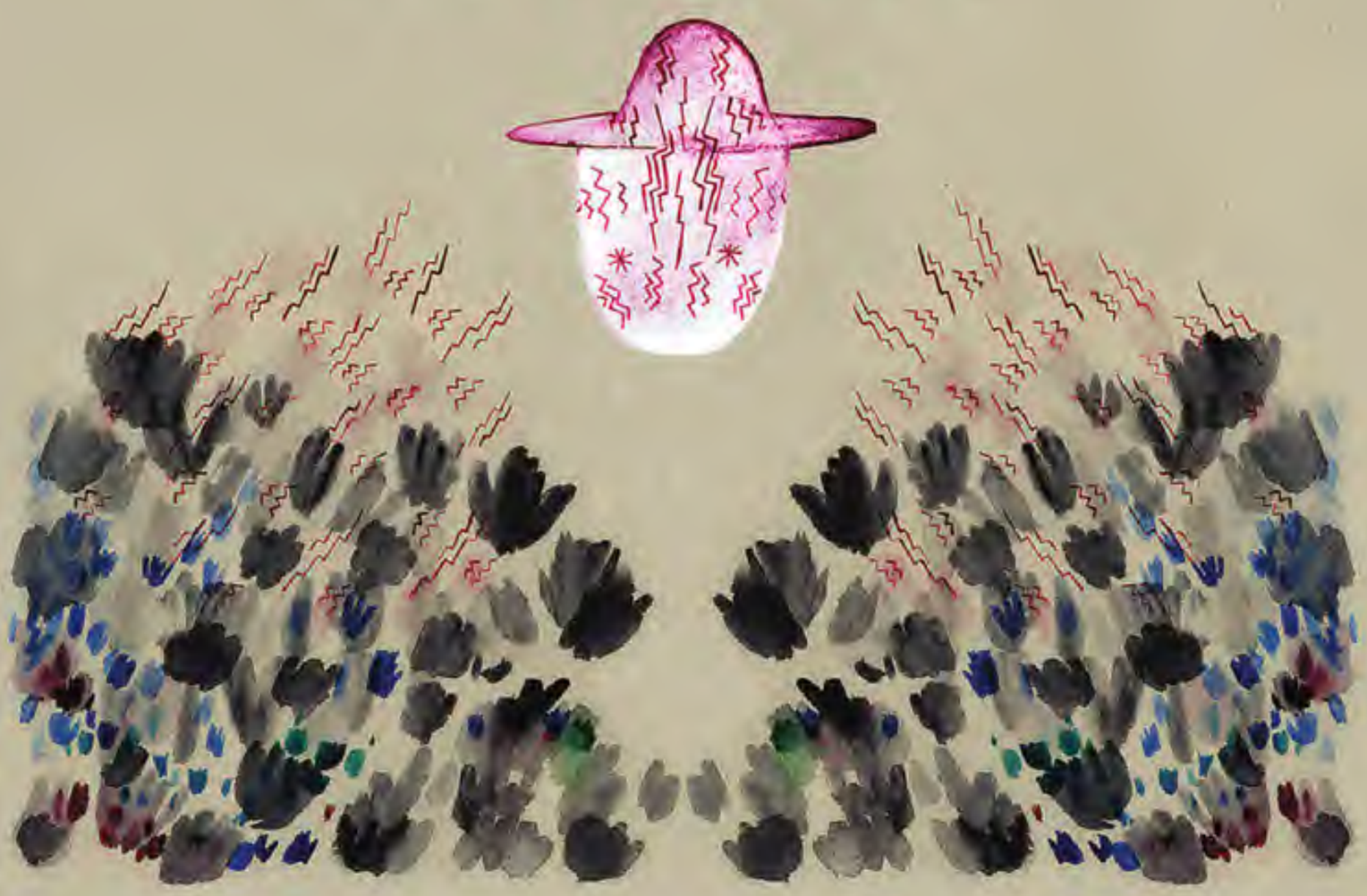
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Atlantis, Buzz Goree and 'Mad' Mike Banks of Underground Resistance, photographed by Daniëlle van Ark

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The Masthead



Gudrun Gut

So who owns hardcore? For this month's Inner Sleeve (page 73), Thurston Moore was invited to comment on his favourite record artwork – *Kytät On Natsisikoja* EP by Finnish punks Kaaos. In the act of unpacking its appeal, he delivers as concise and exhilarating a memoir of early 80s American hardcore as you could wish for in the space provided. In the process of re-staking a claim on the term, Thurston upbraids the British music weekly *NME*, which once devoted a cover and much of one issue to something called HARDCORE. But, he writes, "it wasn't what we knew as 'hardcore' in the USA, and I remember a lot of confusion by kids buying the issue to see some ink on bands like YDI, Autistic Exploits, The Neos..." Well, Thurston, as my alter ego Biba Kopf contributed to that HARDCORE feature, please let me belatedly apologise for causing any confusion. But we're not sorry for continuing to treat hardcore less as a hidebound genre with strict dress and scowl codes, and more as an elusive, unrectified spirit that fuels an undying flame passed from musician to improvisor to actor to writer to film maker to naysayer to whoever rigorously commits their art and being to the core truths their works nurture. It can flare for an instant, for the duration of a solitary 45, or it can burn for a lifetime.

In this definition, they don't come more hardcore than cover stars Underground Resistance, whose founder 'Mad' Mike Banks breaks cover to talk to Mark Fisher (see page 40); nor does music get any more hardcore than the minimal, steeled beatflows produced by UR's earliest incarnation of Banks, Jeff Mills and Robert Hood. Though that strain came to define the second wave of Detroit Techno, UR's output remains stubbornly resistant to being straitjacketed by genre demands. After all, pigeonholing is for shelf-stackers, not restless spirits, and the very way UR configure themselves as a creative unit, record label and radical collective inoculates them against being too easily contained. Indeed, their music has evolved and strengthened through bending electronic waveforms and cross-pollinating 4/4, House, Hardcore, electro and hiphop breakbeats. And, as Mark's piece underlines, a title like "Afrogermanic" says plenty about the distances their Techno has travelled.

That title aptly describes the modus operandi of Basic Channel/Rhythm & Sound's Mark Ernestus and Moritz von Oswald, who have individually remixed tracks by drummer Tony Allen ("Moyege" and "Ole" respectively on Honest Jons). From here it's a short crosstown trip to my single of the month: fellow Berliner Gudrun Gut's *In Pieces* 12" (Monika), whose opening "Move Me" is a remix by Burger/Voigt. Fears that the small gem of Gut's original 45, built on a halting rhythm created by stammer-scratching a red-rose-clenched-in-the-teeth tango record, could withstand Wolfgang Voigt's Kompakt treatment were unnecessary. He recasts it as an entirely other slice of ghostly electro-skank with tango elements intact, at once honouring and extending the song's capacity to unravel the senses.

Finally, this month, *The Wire* launches its digital edition. Hosted by Exact Editions and available as a digital-only subscription (or bolt-on subscription to print subscribers), it offers instant delivery, a fully interactive contents page, hyperlinks, a search function and printable pdfs. See page 99 for details.

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Images Sébastien Agnetti, Kareem Black, Chris Buck, Jesse Chehak, Leon Chew, Tara Darby, Jason Evans, Erwan Frotin, Dominik Gigler, Raphael Hefti, Ivan Jones, Körner Union, Dirk Lindner, Declan O'Neill, Heiko Prigge, Savage Pencil, Michael Schmelling, Anna Schori, Clare Shilland, Chris Strong, Jun Takagi, Jo Ann Toy, Daniëlle van Ark, Eva Vermandel, Kai Von Rabenau, Jake Walters, Winni Wintermeyer, Keiko Yoshida

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Print subscription rates (12 issues)
UK £39
Europe £55
USA and Canada US$100/£55
Rest of the World
£65 Air/£55 Surface

Digital subscription rates (12 months)
£29.50

Distributors

News stands

UK, Europe & Rest of World (excluding USA)
COMAG Specialist Division
Tavistock Works, Tavistock Road
West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QX
Tel +44 (0)1895 433800
Fax +44 (0)1895 433801
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Issue 285

Adventures in Modern Music
November 2007 £3.90
ISSN 0952-0680 (USPS 006231)

23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, United Kingdom Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011 info@thewire.co.uk
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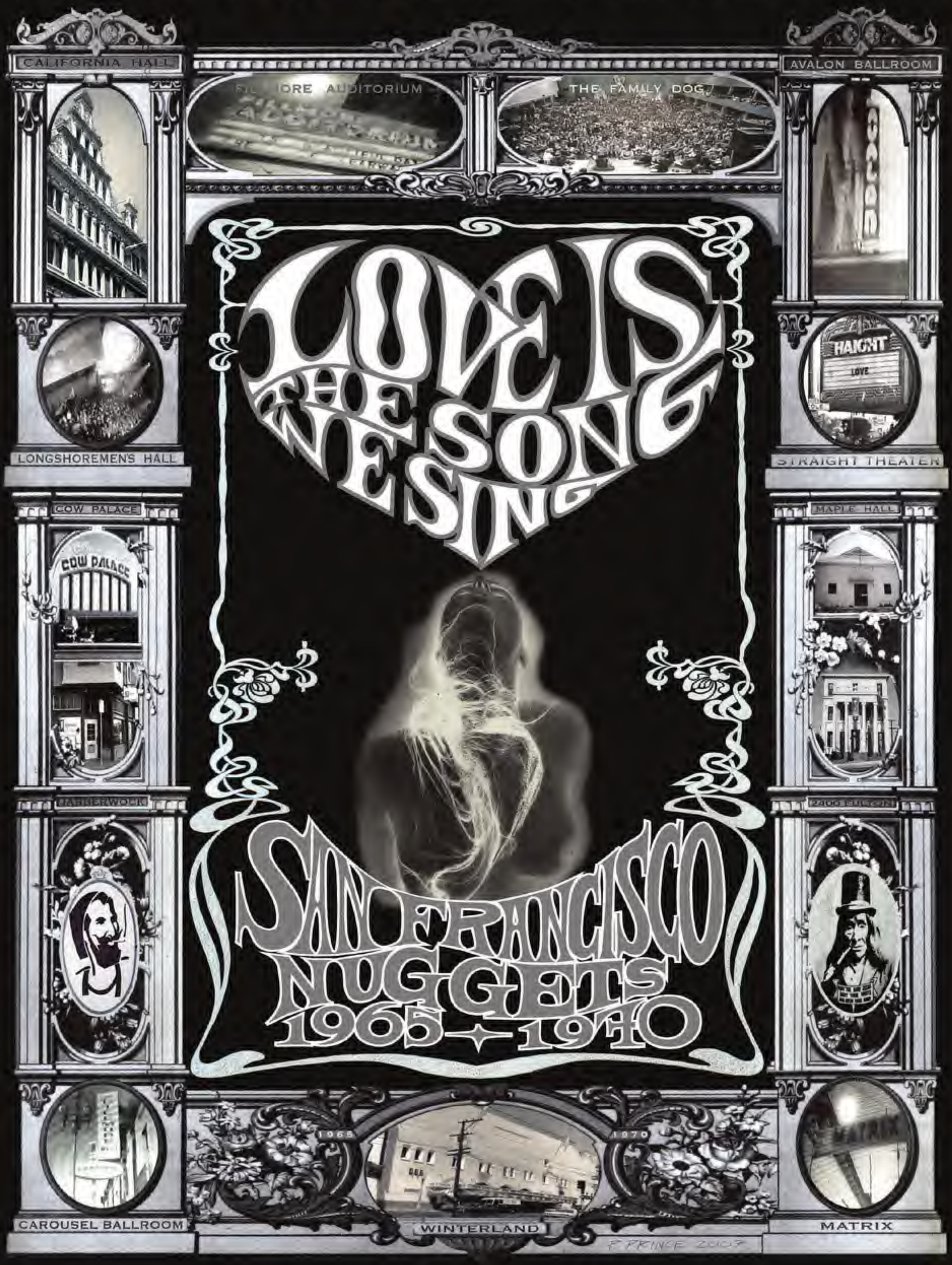
The Wire is published 12 times a year by *The Wire* Magazine Ltd. Printed by St Ives plc, Digital imaging by DP Graphics (www.dpgraphics.co.uk)

USA: *The Wire* ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231) is published 12 times a year by *The Wire* Magazine Ltd at a US subscription rate of $100. Periodicals postage paid at Middlesex, New Jersey 08846. Postmaster, send address changes to: *The Wire* Magazine c/o PO Box 177, Middlesex, NJ 08846. US agent: Pronto Mailers, 200 Wood Ave, Middlesex, NJ 08846. NB: Subscribers, please also inform *The Wire* direct of any address changes

The Wire was founded in 1982 by Anthony Wood. Between 1984–2000 it was part of Naim Attallah's Namara Group. In December 2000 it was purchased in a management buy-out organised by the magazine's staff. It continues to publish as a 100 per cent independent operation

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Robert Wyatt

Cuckooland revisited

It was a very special and moving cover interview with Robert Wyatt (and Alfreda Benge) (*The Wire* 284). I read it while revisiting Wyatt's *Cuckooland* album (I keep going back to it and never get tired of listening to those songs). Thank you Robert Wyatt for all the words and ideas expressed, and for the hours that I have spent listening to your music. Thank you David Toop for the essential narrative – so natural, so tri-dimensional and so human – on the artist and the man. Thank you Jake Walters for the great photography.
Nelio de Sousa via email

Colour of mud

This year's Colour Out Of Space festival in Brighton [*reviewed in this month's On Location, page 81 – Ed*] presented more than 25 artists working in the Improv, noise making and free folk field; so, plenty of opportunities to gauge the current state of affairs. The afternoon talk and panel discussion headed by *The Wire*'s David Keenan looked at the issues around Improv/primal music modes. The event raised a number of issues and concerns for me. The panel of Improv artists possessed zeal bordering on the puritanical when it came to their agenda. It wasn't enough to regard Improv/noise making to be a new avenue for expression, it was the only way!

Interaction between players was dismissed out of hand as "redundant bullshit" (Keenan) and the concept of retaining beats was equally rubbished. Melody, harmony, rhythm, no longer acceptable, it seems.

During the discussion, music making was compared to the visual arts, and when I watched the evening's line-up of acts this and the other issues discussed came to mind. My only experience of completely freeform visual art collaboration was at primary school. A group of us would daub our favourite paints on the shared space and soon would mix the colours together with glee. Within seconds, the reds, blues, yellows and greens would combine. Within a minute the individual colours disappeared into a single hue, everything blurred and dulled down to a dark brownish grey, we called this "coco-custard". We loved the process, and coco-custard became a favourite game, it didn't matter who played or what colours were used, the brown/grey stew of coco-custard always arrived within a minute. And that's what happened repeatedly during the festival.

Any combination of players, not interacting, not referring to any common element (melodic or rhythmic), within a few minutes morphed into a generic soup of digitally delayed, infinite sustain mush, a predictable brownish grey coco-custard. One of the panel spoke of repeating a performance as "fucked-up". I'm sorry, but this is the inevitable fate for this musical arena. A repeated game involving making a (completely predictable) mess is fantastic fun for a five year old, but please don't tell me this is a concept to make any other musical process obsolete.

There is more than one way to skin a cat and it's entirely possible to love both the power of an electric guitar set to 11 and the delicate strum of a kora. Improv noise making is another way of doing things, no more, no less, and we don't need the Exploratory Sound Police to decree otherwise.
Andrew Greaves via email

The same but different

I did not think that anyone would do it, so all praise to Joseph Stannard for tackling the almost impossible task of reviewing what might appear to be an unreviewable CD [*in that each of its 150 copies is different – Ed*]. I refer to Martin Archer's marvellous *Randomworld 1* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 284). As I own copy 3/150, I have no way of agreeing or disagreeing with his review of copy 12/150. The *Randomworld* project poses interesting questions about the review process, which assumes that reviewer and reader experience the same sounds/noises. It set me thinking about *Downbeat* in the late 1960s, in which John Coltrane albums were often reviewed twice in the same issue – invariably picking up no stars and five stars. With *Ascension* we were listening to the same thing but responding differently. However, with *Randomworld* we know that we are listening to something unique to our ears.

Maybe it is time for a feature on Sheffield's busiest musician.
John Coldwell via email

Re-take/re-model

Great Ian Penman review of Michael Bracewell's *Re-Make/Re-Model: Art, Pop, Fashion And The Making Of Roxy Music (1953–1972)* (Print Run, *The Wire* 284). It sent me scurrying back to listen to the music, which appeared to be of less interest to Bracewell than all the art streams feeding into the gestation of his subject. Tellingly, the book closes at the very moment the music went public. Pity that the bonehead who selected the picture accompanying the review didn't notice that it was of a later, Eno-less line-up from some time after the cut-off date of Bracewell's book.
Jane Perry via email

Shuffle mode

I wanted to say that I really appreciated David Mandl's review of the Christian Marclay *Shuffle* performance at New York Roulette (On Location, *The Wire* 282). It's exactly why I did not go. I knew that was going to happen. Thanks for the confirmation and the courage to write a constructive review for those who need it.
Geoff Dugan via email

Corrections
Issue 284 Apologies to Justin Hardison for spelling his name wrong in the review of My Fun's *Sonorine* (The Land Of CD) in Soundcheck.

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Bitstream News and more from under the radar

Burial



A follow up to **Burial**'s self-titled debut album, voted *The Wire*'s record of 2006 (see Rewind, *The Wire* 275), is due for release on Kode9's Hyperdub label in November. Called *Untrue*, it promises to continue the ghostly, crackle-drenched dubstep of the first album. It'll also feature "weird soul music, hypersoul, lovingly processing spectral female voices into vaporised R&B and smudged 2step garage". Hyperdub's Website contains a Q&A with the elusive Burial where he describes the music as an "unwanted pregnancy". www.hyperdub.com

Fusion keyboardist and former Miles Davis collaborator **Joe Zawinul** died in Vienna on 11 September 2007. Born in Austria in 1932 and classically trained, he moved to the US in the late 50s, later joining Miles Davis's group and playing on the landmark album *In A Silent Way*, for which he composed the title track. He formed Weather Report with Wayne Shorter, another Miles Davis alumnus, in 1970, where he continued to experiment with electric piano and synthesizers. He was touring with his Zawinul Syndicate until weeks before his death.

No Music Day is set for 21 November, the day before Saint Cecilia's Day, the patron saint of music. Described as "an aspiration, an idea, an impossible dream, a nightmare", you can mark the occasion by not playing music, or post your own No Music Day statement at www.nomusicday.com.

After a dearth of books on New York's **No Wave**, several come along at once. *No Wave*, by *The Wire*'s Marc Masters, is published this month by Black Dog (www.blackdogonline.com). With a foreword by The Flying Luttenbachers' Weasel Walter, the book traces the history of the shortlived scene from Mars, DNA, Teenage Jesus & The Jerks and The Contortions through to Glenn Branca, ESG and Sonic Youth. The book includes many new interviews as well as a No Wave cinema section, and is richly illustrated with rare photos, record covers and other ephemera. Soul Jazz's *New York Noise* is also due out this month, containing photography by Paula Court as well as comments from key figures from NYC's music and art worlds. Meanwhile, Thurston Moore and Byron Coley are working on their own photo history of No Wave, publication date unknown.

More book news: *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* by *The Wire*'s **Alan Licht**, with a foreword by Jim O'Rourke, is published this month by Rizzoli. It promises to tell the complete story of sound art, "looking at the critical cross-pollination that has led to some of the most important and challenging art being produced today".

Despite turning 70 a few years ago, **Sunny Murray** is enjoying a turn in the limelight. The documentary *Sunny's Time Now*, a portrait of the former Cecil Taylor and Albert Ayler drummer who played on such albums as *Nefertiti, The Beautiful One Has Come* and *Spiritual Unity*, is currently in production, to be released early next year. Murray has put together a new line-up of his Change Of The Century Orchestra for a filmed performance in Dudelange, Luxembourg in November, with other free jazz players including Grachan Moncur III and Sonny Simmons. Simmons will also be performing with Tight Meat as part of The Wire 25 in London on 19 November (see Out There).

Robert Wyatt made a surprise rare appearance on 22 September, singing with The Dylan Howe Quintet in Lincoln. Overcoming stage nerves, Wyatt sang Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight" with the jazz group after expressing interest in their upcoming project *The Subterraneans,* an experimental jazz re-imagining of David Bowie's *Low* and *Heroes* featuring Portishead's Adrian Utley and Israeli author/jazz musician Gilad Atzmon.

British jazz saxophonist **Mike Osborne** died of lung cancer on 19 September. Born 1941 in Hereford, he was a member of Chris McGregor's Brotherhood Of Breath in the 60s and 70s, and played with John Surman on the latter's early 70s albums *John Surman* and *How Many Clouds Can You See*. He retired from music in the early 80s due to illness.

Mike Osborne



The next edition of the **AV Festival**, the North East of England's festival of digital music, art and the moving image, is issuing a call for proposals for sound based commissions. The event happens biennially in Newcastle/Gateshead, Sunderland and Middlesborough. More information can be found at www.avfestival.co.uk/opportunities

The new issue of Berlin interview magazine *mono.kultur*, published by *The Wire* photographer Kai Von Rabenau, is dedicated to Wu-Tang Clan rapper **GZA/Genius**. Ahead of the fifth Clan album *The 8 Diagrams*, released this month, GZA talked with *mono.kultur* about the early days of The Clan, the art of chess and the meaning of a pyroclastic flow. As part of the Don't Look Back series, GZA will be performing *Liquid Swords* in its entirety on 9 December at London's Koko.

Wu-Tang's GZA



The Wire contributor Mosi Reeves has launched an online Webzine, ***Plug One Mag***, with interviews, reviews and features covering many shades of hiphop. Artists and labels covered include the likes of Common, Kanye West, Stones Throw, Flying Lotus, Alpha Pup and Def Jux. www.plugonemag.com

Meanwhile, a new UK fanzine dedicated to reggae, dubstep and Grime has hit the streets. The first edition of ***Woofah*** features interviews with Iration Steppers, Pinch and Skepta, and is available from record shops and online. www.myspace.com/woofah

Following the screening of the silent classic ***Häxan*** with a live score by dulcimer player Geoff Smith (see On Screen, *The Wire* 281), it has been released on DVD in a package that also contains a William Burroughs-narrated version along with the original film, alternately soundtracked by Smith and Bronnt Industries Kapital. Another Swedish silent, Victor Sjöström's *The Phantom Carriage*, is due for release on 12 November, with soundtrack by KTL. Both releases are on Tartan Video.

You could be forgiven for thinking that New Zealand had a monopoly on lathe cut singles. But a Northern Ireland label **5MA** (5 Minute Association) is now also set to release self-made 7", 10" and 12" records in editions of 100, with music from Richard Youngs, Boduf Songs, Loren Connors and Cursillistas.

Dub legend **Lee Perry** is completing a new album for Narnack Records, with Andrew WK as collaborator and producer, and vocals from The Slits' Ari Up.

Post-punk pioneers **Wire** have announced a new four-track EP, to be released this autumn. *Read & Burn 03*, the latest in a series of "research & development" recordings begun in the early part of the decade with the group's original line-up, will be released on 12 November on their own Pink Flag label. □

GEORGINA COOK (BURIAL); JAK KILBY (OSBORNE)

The Joined-up World of The Wire



Loren Connors

PETER GANNUSHI (CONNORS)

www.thewire.co.uk
New items going up on *The Wire*'s official site during November include the unedited transcript of Mark Fisher's Underground Resistance interview, a video featuring Loren Connors, exclusive MP3s from Sonny Simmons's latest collaborators Tight Meat, audio clips from Phil Freeman's Invisible Jukebox with JG Thirlwell as well as music by Thirlwell himself, a competition to win a bag of goodies from Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace label, footage from the recent Numusic festival held in Stavanger, Norway including clips from Underground Resistance, Felix Kubin and Killl, plus a gallery of photos taken at *The Wire*'s recent Adventures In Modern Music Festival in Chicago. The site will also have regularly updated content on *The Wire* 25, the magazine's 25th anniversary season of live events (see Out There), including a number of live online broadcasts from selected venues, plus photo galleries, additional recordings and footage updated throughout the festival. Other recent additions to the site include footage taken from Leafcutter John's *Soundtrap 2* installation, clips of live performances by Oren Ambarchi, Laurie Anderson's original *O Superman* video, plus MP3s from Oxbow, Shape Of Broad Minds, Paul Bley, Starving Weirdos, Lost In Hildurness, Laurie Anderson, Ricardo Villalobos, Matthew Dear, Throbbing Gristle, Robin Williamson, Keijo, KTL, Wiley and Neil Campbell.

Below The Radar
For the second year running, this December *The Wire* will decamp to Porto's Casa Da Música venue to host a night of outsider UK sounds under the banner, Below The Radar. The line-up has been curated by Tony Herrington and will feature new wyrd electronica from Neil Campbell's solo Astral Social Club project; digital decompositions from John Wall & L Gamble; a special Improv set from UK hiphop surrealist Infinite Livez; plus DJ interventions from Skull Disco's dubstep deviant Appleblim. The action takes place at Porto's futuristic Casa Da Música venue on 1 December. www.casadamusica.com.



Infinite Livez

Adventures In Modern Music on Resonance 104.4 FM
Following a summer break while the Resonance FM studio relocated to new premises in East London, *The Wire*'s weekly show on London's only arts radio station is now back on air with a new format and in a new time slot. The show is now broadcast across central London on 104.4 FM, with simultaneous streaming at www.resonancefm.com, every Thursday between 9–10:30pm. In its new incarnation the show will feature special monthly guest mixes from a host of *Wire*-friendly musicians, writers, DJs and so on, as well as regular live sessions, plus the usual open-ended selection of the kind of music you read about in the magazine every month.

Special subscriber CDs
With this month's November issue all *The Wire*'s subscribers will receive a free copy of a new double CD marking this year's edition of Atlantic Waves, London's International Festival of Exploratory Music. Meanwhile, with next month's December issue all subscribers will receive a free copy of *Whispers From The Forests, Screams From The Mountains*, a new compilation tracking the current state of the Swedish underground. See the inside back cover for more details.

For more updates on what's happening in The Joined-up World of *The Wire*, subscribe to The Conduit, our fortnightly newsletter, at www.thewire.co.uk

The December issue of *The Wire* will be on sale from 22 November

Trip Or Squeek By Savage Pencil



www.savagepencil.com

Beat mobility By Dave Stelfox

"One day I'd like to be in a position where I'm working with people like Rihanna," says hiphop producer Stephen Ellison. "I'm all for crossing over into the mainstream..." At first glance, this may seem like an unlikely statement from underground hiphop's latest big hope. Then again, Ellison is no ordinary backpack producer. Under his recording alias of Flying Lotus, the 23 year old has, over the past couple of years, crafted a diverse catalogue of lurching, experimental rhythms impressive enough for him to be frequently compared to J-Dilla, Madlib and Sa-Ra Creative Partners.

"When people talk to me about underground hiphop I can understand why," he continues. "But that's really not where I'm at. I'm from Los Angeles, so the music I grew up listening to was much more street-oriented. I came up hearing artists like Snoop Dogg, Dr Dre and lots of G-funk – you know, that real West Coast sound. That's what made me want to start making music, what made me think that creating beats was something I wanted to do. When you think about that, the idea of being underground isn't important. It's all about making good music, but also making something that people want to hear. I don't want to work on beats that no one likes, so the more popular I am, the better. Besides, I wouldn't mind getting some of that Kanye money."

From last year's album, *1983*, released on the Los Angeles label Plug Research, through to his current *Reset* EP on the UK's Warp Records, Ellison's work bridges these gaps and more. While organic enough to sit comfortably alongside the more traditional output of imprints such as Stones Throw, his juxtapositions of hiccupping grooves and dissonant synth splashes, caustic drum programming and gentle melody, and textures both analogue and digital equally recall the likes of Dabrye, 4Hero, Theo Parrish and Moodymann. This mixed bag of reference points makes for an unpredictable and beguiling experience – and if a certain cinematic quality appears to be at play in Flying Lotus's songs, that's no coincidence, either.

"I spent time at two different film schools," he explains. "For a while, that's what I wanted to do – make great movies. Those ideas definitely carry through to my music now. I'm actually quite a visual artist when I'm making beats. I can almost see the story that I want to tell when I'm working with sound. That's why I don't tend to collaborate with a lot of vocalists. You can create narratives in other ways and, sometimes, when you know what a piece of music means to you, you really don't want a rapper coming in and making it about something different."

Ellison has previously composed music for the US Adult Swim TV network; his interest in video based art also extends to a deeply personal project that Ellison hopes to resume in the near future. "A while ago I began making a documentary about my great aunt, Alice Coltrane," he says. "I have a lot of footage of her, but after she passed earlier this year I've not wanted to touch it. It's the same for the rest of my family. For a long time it's been difficult to come to terms with her death. She was such a big presence for all of us – she really held us together. But now we're all readjusting and gradually finding it easier to talk about her again. Slowly, we're starting to bring her up in conversations and telling stories about her again. When the time is right and everyone is comfortable just remembering her for the special person she was, I'll finish it."

Growing up, as he describes it, "surrounded by crazy-talented musicians all the time" understandably served as a powerful inspiration for Ellison, but rather than offering practical direction, these relationships gave something considerably more valuable. "I think my mother always knew that I wasn't cut out to go out and get a normal job," he says. "I was always really lucky in the sense that I was encouraged to be creative and, obviously, music was one of those outlets. As far as my relationship with my aunt is concerned, though, we never really talked about music much. I mean, she knew what I was doing and she always expressed an interest, but really she was much more of a spiritual mentor to me, someone who gave me guidance and insight because that was always the biggest part of her own life."

As a predominantly instrumental artist, enamoured with the intricate possibilities of sound, it's perhaps not unexpected that, like Bomb Squad producer Hank Shocklee, Ellison has recently become interested in the womblike sub-bass and tingling percussion of dubstep; even experimenting with the genre himself after attending Kode9 and Skream's performance at Barcelona's Sonar Festival earlier this year.

"That was a great show," he enthuses. "The music those guys were playing really motivated me, but I couldn't help feeling that, in a lot of dubstep I'd heard before, something was slightly missing. So I ended up going straight back to my hotel room afterwards and trying to see what I could do with the ideas that they are exploring. I'm pretty sure that some of that flavour will come through on the album that I'm making for Warp right now. But honestly, most of the time when I'm working I have no idea what's going to happen. Everything's still new and unexpected and I guess that's what makes me want to keep on doing it." ☐ Reset *is out now on Warp*

Stephen Ellison of Flying Lotus



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A good wheeze
By Brian Morton

David Watson


David Watson

New Zealand born, New York based guitarist-turned-bagpiper David Watson knows his instrument's history. "I guess it all changed with Queen Victoria, when the remnants of the [Scottish] clans were being conscripted into the imperial army," he explains. "Piping acquired that militaristic association and with it a competitive element... these days, that is the thing that keeps it strong and viable." Not unlike jazz, I suggest, except that nowadays there's nothing in jazz taking the place of the old cutting contests; it's all got a bit polite and liberal. Later, he spins a fascinating argument about the Ottoman Empire and the double-reed instruments and percussion of the old janissary bands being echoed by the pipes and drums of the Scottish regiments in occupied Palestine. He has plans to work there soon.

But steady; by looking at the past we're getting ahead of ourselves. How did it all start? "As a guitar player I had a whole range of eclectic influences, and one of them was bagpiping. As a young guitarist in the early 80s trying to cop Cecil Taylor parts, the combination of what I perceived as something socially conservative – a pipe band – and the sound they made was shocking and intriguing." Watson still turns out with a pipe band in New York. It's good for basic technique, but it's also an aspect of what he describes as "outdoor vernacular music" – "some people would say 'the Charles Ives thing', but I'd say 'the parade thing'" – which has you crash-coursing acoustic science as your sound battens off walls, disappears up alleyways and tunnels.

Both of his instruments are represented on the magnificent new double CD *Fingering An Idea*, made at Phill Niblock's suggestion and released on XI Records. New, but for the fact that some of the material on the guitar disc comes from a cassette recording made in 1987. Nobody's heard anything quite like the stuff on *Dexter*, the bagpipe disc, a subtitle that makes the guitar material the work of the left hand, *Sinister*. Much of what Watson has to say about the record bears on technique, but not in a process-obsessed way, more as a way of avoiding the obvious Improv pigeonholes. Again, he likes to get the history pinned down, and talks about earlier recording projects first. "*Wax And Wane* [Ecstatic Peace 1998] was a downtown Improv disc: some tunes, some Improv, good players. I was playing guitar and pipes in that band, so it was kind of transitional. *Skirl* [Avant 1999] I considered a pipe and drums record. Just that the drums were by Cyro Baptista, Tony Buck, Christine Bard, and Jim Pugliese. After that, I wanted to make a more intimate thing. So I did *Throats* with two vocalists. Not an easy job, I'd imagine – being a vocalist working with Highland pipes. But I had Koichi Makigami and Shelley Hirsch. Perfect. On *Fingering An Idea* I wanted to have more of a space and distance thing."

These might sound like abstractions, but with an instrument which offers you nothing in the way of harmony or dynamics, which throws you back on those intensely personal things, sound, timing and phrasing, and which has that long, fraught supra-personal history to contend with as well, these are very present and practical concerns. Watson speaks frankly about the obstacles he's faced, but also the liberations the instrument has afforded him. First, though, he wants to nail down the point that he's not just a "doubler", looking for new sonic grass like Albert Ayler, and certainly not a speciality act like Rufus Harley. "Look, I've played pibroch for years, it is something I love and can really sink my teeth into. Trad dance music I am not quite so enthused about... strathspeys, reels, jigs, I practise them for the technical workout. And that is it.

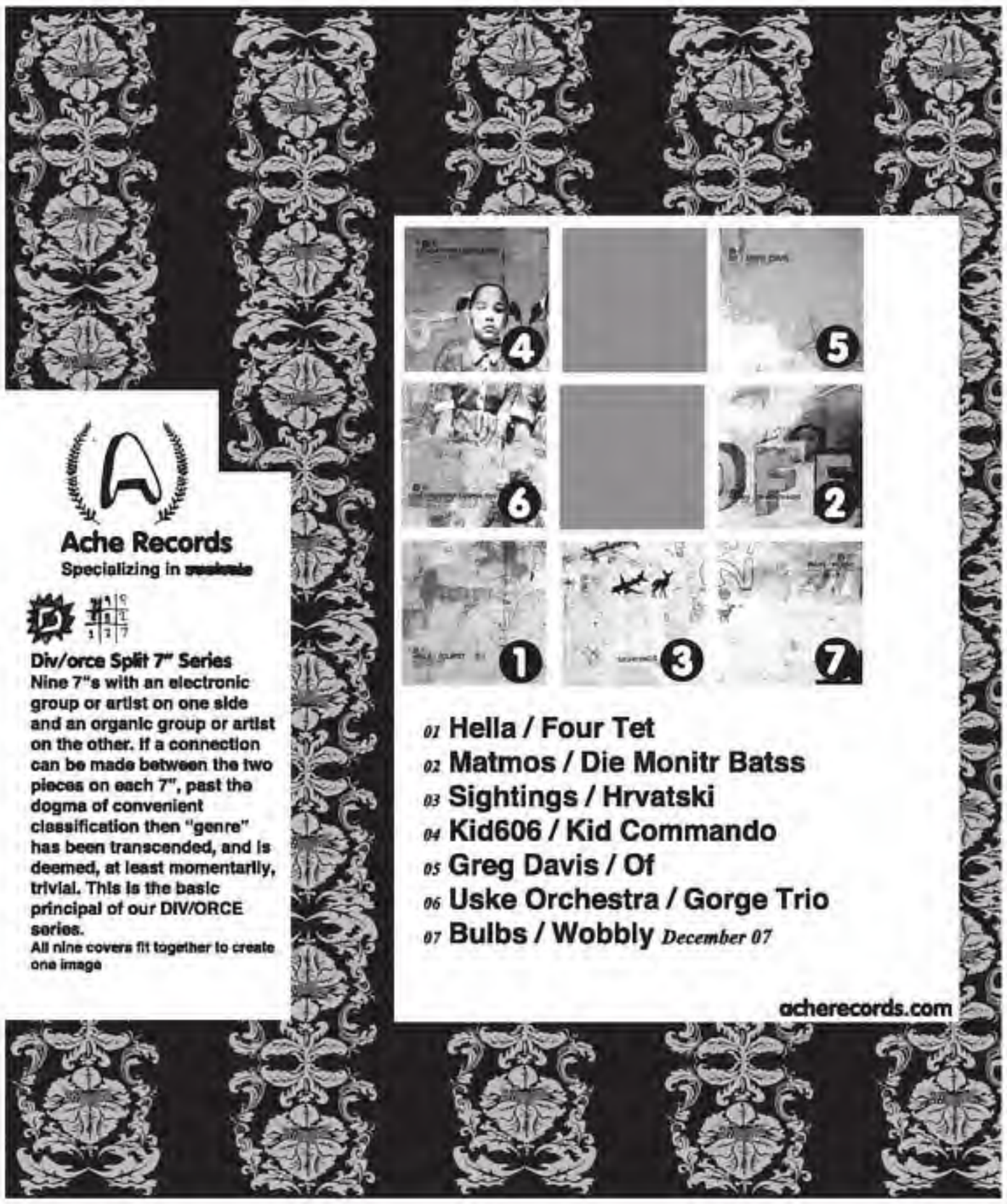
"Don Cherry playing with Ayler: that, to me, is a very pibrochy thing. That was a big conscious influence on my playing guitar. Ayler playing pipes? Barely interests me. If a bagpiper wants a model from that era and area, I'd suggest Sharrock and McLaughlin on [Miles Davis's] *Jack Johnson*.

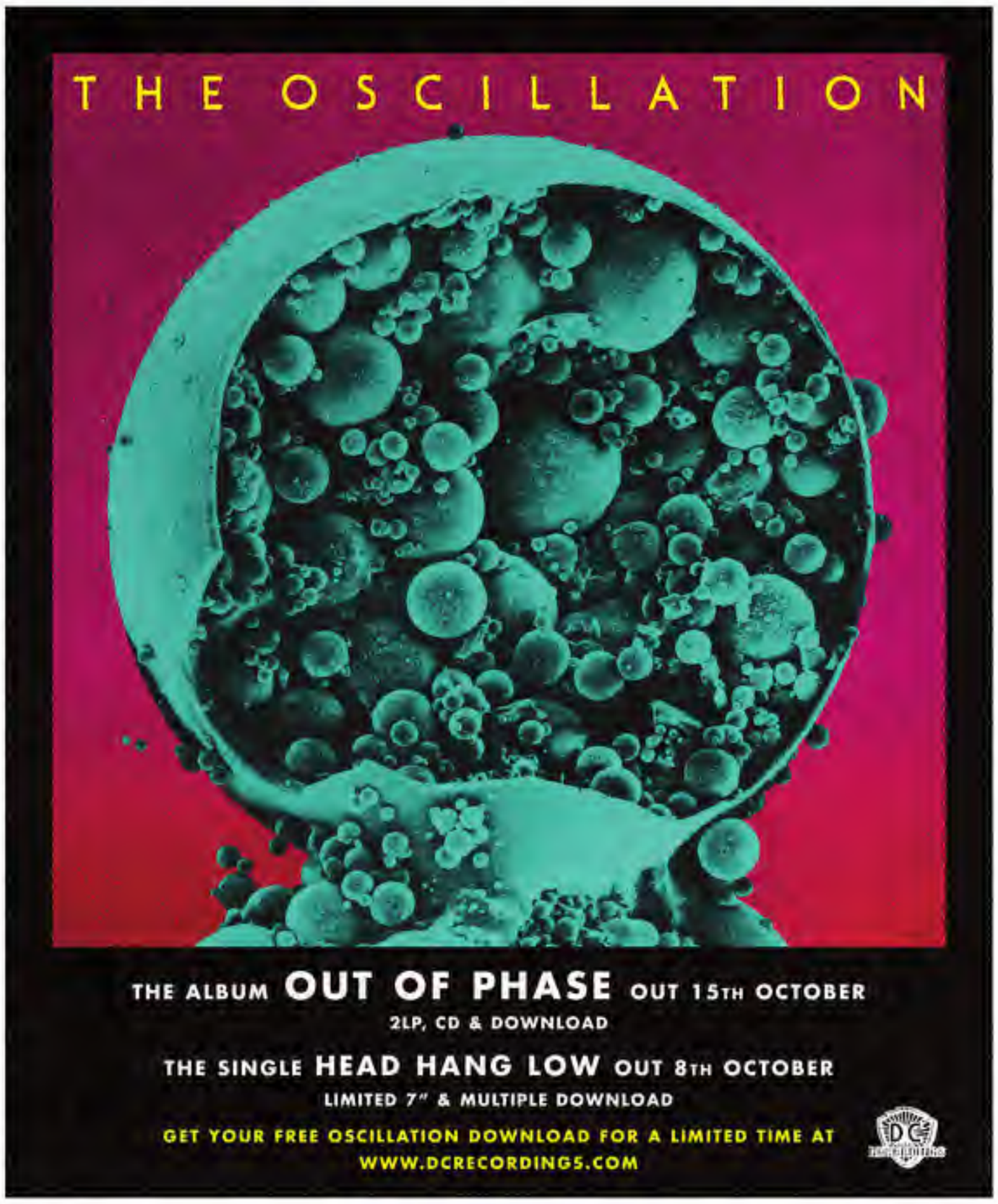
"New York is a great place to be playing bagpipes," he continues. "There is a strong band scene here, but also there is that downtown thing where just about anything goes. Playing pipes meant that I couldn't just be the pick-up guitar player any more. It's different for audiences, who still get hung up on the instrument, but I work on it every day and I'm long past the novelty. It's got a lot to do with how you perceive the limitations. With guitar, it's different. With the pipes, it's a matter of accepting those limitations and working through that. I actually listen a whole lot better than I used to."

Open-eared or not, what about working with other players? You mentioned the problems those singers must have had. "This is where guys like Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo" – the latter a colleague, with Günter Müller, in a "slow-moving" group called Glacial – "are so great. Those guys can listen microscopically at the highest volume, deal with the sort of detail you'd only expect to pick out of very quiet music, but at billboard size."

Watson's versatility has led to collaborations with the entire cast of New York's downtown scene, as well as artists and film makers such as Matthew Barney and Abigail Child. His other group, Endgame, features Jim Pugliese, Christine Bard and Michaël Attias. "When you are putting different musical traditions together, you aren't just combining different scales, timbres or whatever... you are combining what? Different worlds? Ways of being a group, differing sense of time, where the music should best take place? A bar, a hall, through earphones? This is all somehow represented within the music... I like these problems. You put pipes in a performance, and all these assumed aspects of a performance come out to the forefront. About a year ago, I had a first-meeting gig with John Butcher on sax and Chris Mann reading his texts. In a fairly small room. On paper that sounds like a recipe for disaster. The challenge of working this out, creating a shared sound world is part of the improvisor tradition that I really love. Utopian maybe, but not in any easy way." ☐ Fingering An Idea *is out now on XI Records*

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Concussion discussion
By Nick Cain

In conversation with Portland based sound artist Daniel Menche, the notion of a physicality of sound – the physical effort and energy required for the artist to produce sound, and the physical effect and energy the sound generates in the listener – crops up repeatedly. "The relationship between sound and physicality has always fascinated me," he comments, "whether it's traditional African dance or ultraviolent moshpits at a Metal concert. Sound pushes the blood and that blood just has to go somewhere. Music is energy and it's only natural that intense physicality follows it."

Menche frequently uses his body as a sound source for his recordings and live performances. In recent years they have split in binary fashion between longform drones and what he has dubbed "concussions", which layer multiple percussive loops into polyrhythmic barrages and flatten them into sheets of sound. Both approaches have been documented on a flood of releases, 16 since 2004. Menche is typically characterised as a noise artist, but he tempers a confrontational intent with carefully controlled levels of volume and intensity, his preference for rich harmonics and dense textures making his albums immersive rather than assaultive.

"I want to convey through my performances that my body and my physical energy are the sound sources," Menche explains. "I hope to create sonic energy so intense that it wipes out my body during the performance. The sound builds and builds towards a frantic meltdown of noise – and so does my body. Both performance situations have the same goals and intent – for the sound to overwhelm and submerge the listener, to create 'energy' over 'music'."

Unsurprisingly, such demanding workouts require peak conditioning, and Menche describes himself as an "exercise fanatic". His percussive recordings were originally conceived as soundtracks for his runs on forest dirt tracks. "'Endorphins and noise' sums it up," he remarks wryly. "I may be one of the healthiest sound artists ever, who knows?"

Menche's drone recordings similarly emphasise layering. Running the gamut from full-frequency blasts to thin streams of sound hovering in the upper register, the drones are pitchshifted and juxtaposed with shifting tones and granular textures. "I prefer intense drama over extreme noise. I really want the music to be heard as clearly as possible and for the compositional skeleton to be seen," he explains. "Like viewing the human body in an invisible skin display or a house made of glass." His albums are painstakingly planned, with little leeway for spontaneity. "I am a rather intense control freak when creating music," he admits. "The whole concept of 'Improv music' does not even come close to my radar of thinking. It's simply not my musical pathology."

Over the past few years Menche has been narrowing the gap between the two divergent strands of his output. 2006's *Creatures Of Cadence* came closest to merging them; more recent recordings like *Wolf's Milk, Bleeding Heavens, Body Melt* and *Glass Forest* cautiously blend sustained sounds with rhythmic elements, in the form of smaller, looping sounds rather than pounding drumbeats. Menche terminated his phase of pure percussion recordings with *Animality*, released earlier this year, but has no plans to abandon his use of rhythm. "I believe rhythmic sounds give a sense of living in the compositions. It simply excites me – hearing patterns of drums and the colours of pulses. There will always be a sense of rhythm in my recordings."

All of which is a long way from Menche's first, early 90s recordings, which utilised a more aggressive and abrasive and less distinctive post-Industrial methodology. They're adequately represented by 2005's *Scattered Remains*, a retrospective double CD. On 1997's *Field Of Skin*, Menche abruptly changed direction, partly prompted by misperceptions of his intent, stripping his music down to focus on laminal drones. "*Field Of Skin* was a new beginning for my work," he explains. "After recording [1997's] *Screaming Caress* I realised that it was getting caged up in this 'darker than thou' Ambient noise genre. I am very proud of my early recordings yet I do confess there was a bit of an Old Testament 'fire and brimstone' feel to them."

For someone who proudly refers to himself as a "one-man army", Menche has collaborated with a diverse range of kindred spirits, including KK Null, Damien Romero and John Wiese. He reminisces fondly about his two collaborations with Kiyoshi Mizutani, the one-time Merzbow member now known for his evocative field recordings, and lauds guitarist Kevin Drumm, with whom he recorded the synapse-rinsing *Gauntlet*. "We're both diehard Metalheads. Originally we wanted to call it *Authority*, just as a title for working towards a one hour loud drone piece. But we decided that our original drone approach was not 'fun' enough. So we went for something with a huge and oppressive Metal feel."

Work was recently completed on *Progeny Of Flies*, with Andrew Liles. "I told him 'I'll create the feel and you create the music', simple as that," Menche relates. "The final recordings are extremely gorgeous, with Andrew playing lovely high-range minimal piano and other keyboard instruments and my low range drones. Nothing loud, but still crushing with emotion."

Menche now plans to record fewer albums and stop releasing CDs altogether, in favour of LPs and DVDs, the latter to include films he has recently been shooting – "all black and white, vast landscapes of mountains, valleys and wildlife nature", he explains. "Large, epic-size imagery." The scale and the subject matter of the films are thematically appropriate. "My music has always been a 'beautiful beast' of sorts," he ponders. "For instance, I love observing massive size animals while they are sleeping peacefully. Metaphorically speaking I can be compared to a shepherd of wild beasts. The beasts are noise and sound and I am trying to gather them and contain them. And then arrange the wild beasts to form a fantastic choreography of dance.

"Actually I have always viewed my music work as being rather animalistic, whether soft or violent. All creatures great and small are either gentle or savage, emotional and full of life. That is what I wish for my music to convey – wild, savage, violent, and at the same time also elegant, graceful, and beautiful. I cannot choose sides." □ Bleeding Heavens *is on Blossoming Noise,* Wolf's Milk *is on Utech,* Glass Forest *and* Body Melt *are on Important,* Gauntlet *is on Editions Mego,* Progeny Of Flies *is on Beta-Lactam Ring. www.esophagus.com/htdb/menche/*

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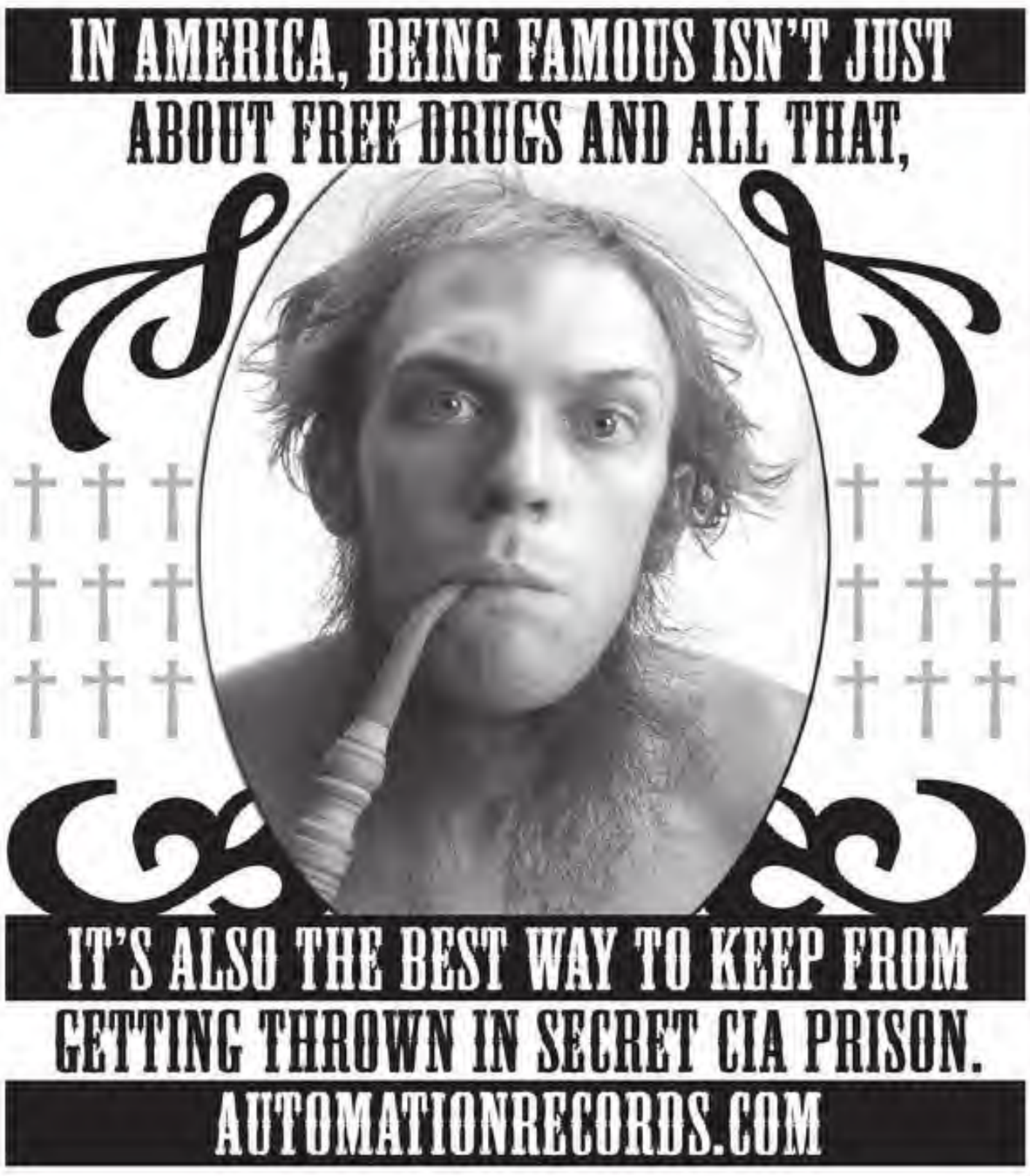
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Global Ear Addis Ababa

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Erin MacLeod hears Ethio-jazz pioneer Mulatu Astatke's call for a new national music in Ethiopia

Mulatu Astatke



According to the Ethiopian calendar, 11 September 2007 marked the last day of 1999 and their 13-month year, and the new millennium began. Even now, beyond the ubiquitous image of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie, and shocking photographs of the 1984 famine, Ethiopia retains much of its mystery. Over the past few years, however, Mulatu Astatke has made more than a dint in the consciousness of music listeners worldwide. The most popular artist in Buda Musique's *Ethiopiques* series, Mulatu's recordings have garnered critical acclaim and interest in Ethiopian music and culture.

For many, Astatke's evocative and emotive tracks, featured on the soundtrack of Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers*, outshone the film. He has collaborated with the Massachusetts based Either/Orchestra and will speak at this year's Red Bull Music Academy in Toronto. Though all this recent attention has transformed Astatke into what might be called the face of Ethiopian music, the driven composer with a love of the vibraphone is quick to add that his best known works – *Afro-Latin Soul Volumes 1 & 2*, and *Mulatu Of Ethiopia* – were all recorded in New York between 1966 and 1972. Ethiopia's celebrations of the first days of the 21st century commenced, Astatke moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, beginning a year-long fellowship at Harvard.

Sitting in Addis Ababa at his beloved Ghion Hotel – a location that wouldn't be out of place in a Connery-era Bond film – Mulatu talks animatedly about the invention of Ethio-jazz during his time at the famed Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he was their first African student. "There were these Cubans, these Venezuelans, playing all kinds of music in all directions. I just went crazy. I was developing arrangements and, in the middle of all this, I thought 'Why not develop something Ethiopian?' So I created a music called 'Ethio-jazz'. I used the Ethiopian structures to create melodies, but instead of using cultural instruments, I used Western instruments like the piano and the contrabass. I somehow created ways to use the Ethiopian modes, being very careful not to lose the feeling."

The unique sound and feel of Ethio-jazz is a result of adapting the pentatonic nature of Ethiopian music: the five-stringed krar, the cello-like masinko, and the wooden washint flute are common to northern Amhara and Tigray music. Eerie, moody and funky, Astatke's arrangements draw strongly from traditional music. "I got what I wanted with European instruments. I wanted people to listen and respect the music of Ethiopia, and they did. I've been successful with it, but we still need to develop our instruments. Think of Trinidad's steel pan. It's so great and unique. They can play Beethoven with that thing! Why not develop our instruments and play something like that?"

"Do you know about the Azmaris?" he asks, referencing the Ethiopian musicians that serve as traditional entertainment. "I had a programme on television here called *Bringing The Azmaris To The 20th Century*. I upgraded the strings on the krar, and we played some beautiful jazz standards like "Mercy Mercy", "Never On Sunday", and "Summertime". We had bass krar and lead krars, all playing in harmony. It wasn't 100 per cent successful, because I built the krars myself. The next step is to go to Massachusetts Institute of Technology and have them help me develop the krar. It will be so beautiful. Then people will say, 'Wow! The real Ethio-jazz has been developed'."

Ethio-jazz, for Astatke, is a reflection of a particular time. "Ethio-jazz started 40 years ago," he recalls. "That was the feeling of Ethiopia back then. Most of this composition was done about that era." By flipping his concept around and attempting to bring more traditional instruments to the West, he believes that now might be the right time to present more of the Ethiopian musical landscape.



Revellers at an Azmari 'bet'

Oromo dancers



Most of the music heard on Ethiopian streets today, blasting from small CD and cassette shops, features synthesized instrumental tracks with autotuned vocals. While learning to discern between Guragingna, Tigringna, Asaan Oromo, Wolaitinga, Amharic and other types of music, it's difficult to find varieties that feature any semblance of analogue instrumentation unless you venture out to an Azmari 'bet' in the evening. Astatke laments this lack of organic sound, but understands the practical reality of music production in his country. "When you go to a developed country you can have thousands and thousands of musicians. You have a choice, because you have people to sponsor music. Everywhere you can somehow develop musicians and develop the arts. Here, who's got the money for a 12 or 15 piece band? Japan makes technology that allows one man to do the work of 60, 70 people. Easy."

Ethiopian music needs money for survival, but for Astatke respect is also key – not just from the West, but from within Ethiopia itself. "We should learn to respect the people who created the washint and the krar and the masinko," he explains. "Bulls are used for farming. After the bull dies, the family eats the meat. But then they take the skin and they make a drum out of it. And they continue. After the bull helps us, you can use his skin as a drum and you dance with it, enjoy yourself. The horse – after he dies, you cut the tail, and you make a masinko! You cannot create a washint from green wood. You have to cut it and let it change to yellow and then you can start playing with it after it dies. All our musical instruments are created from what has passed away. We create new life. We should learn to respect our people who created this. They are our source." ☐ *Mulatu Astatke's* Ethio-Jazz And Musique Instrumentale 1969–74 *is Volume 4 in Buda Musique's* Ethiopiques *series*

ERIN MACLEOD

The Wire T-shirts 2007

The Wire T-shirt comes in two styles: a standard black shirt printed with *The Wire*'s 25th anniversary logo; plus a series of limited edition shirts featuring specially commissioned designs by a variety of underground artists, musicians and organisations. These special edition T-shirts are printed in limited runs of 100 shirts each. Once these have been sold, that's it, they won't be reprinted. For details of prices, sizes and how to order, turn to page 101, or go to www.thewire.co.uk/shop



The 25th anniversary T-shirt

A special version of our standard shirt, marking the fact that 2007 is *The Wire*'s 25th anniversary year, with our silver jubilee logo printed in white on a black shirt, plus *The Wire* url printed in white on the right sleeve. Unlimited edition.



Infinite Livez *Untitled*

A new piece of artwork by the Cockney surrealist of UK hiphop. Printed in red, black and white on a denim blue shirt with *The Wire* url printed in white on the right sleeve. Limited edition of 100 shirts.

Cross Platform
Sound in other media

Perched between art and music, the work of Juneau/Projects/ explores the interface between technology and nature, and electronics and handicraft. By David Stubbs



Walkman/Lake (2001)



Live at CAC Vilnius, Lithuania

One of the earliest Juneau/Projects/ pieces was *Walkman/Lake*, a video/performance work. Philip Duckworth films as his colleague Ben Sadler rows out onto Coniston Water in the Lake District in a small dinghy, carrying with him a Walkman blasting out the rich, elegiac tones of Richard Strauss's *Metamorphosen*. When he reaches the middle of the lake, he drops the Walkman into the water. As the cassette player 'drowns', its electronic death throes are excruciating and prolonged, as the water seeps into the circuitry, and broadcast over a PA at the side of the lake.

"We did enjoy that in a weird, anthropomorphic way," says Sadler. "The idea that the Walkman was struggling for its very life. It's as if there was a soul to this technology." Other works they made at this time included the ritual burning of a record player with The Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks* on the turntable and a film of a Cumbrian deer hunter destroying a video camera with a single rifle shot; again, the machine's demise is recorded, as it fades first to flickering green, then black.

As with much of their work, these pieces are funny, strangely touching and paradoxical. "We were looking at the idea of destruction being a creative thing," explains Sadler. It's also about the interface between nature and technology, the 'real' and the artificially generated, about the elusive, indeed illusory notion of authenticity. Another piece initially looks like a relief carving of a rock group, which a cursory inspection reveals not to be a product of wood and chisel but a meticulous Photoshop job. But then, as Duckworth points out, Photoshop is just another tool, and it would have taken as long to do the piece digitally as to hand carve it. They hand-design guitars, such as for their *Woodcraft Folk* performance at London's f a projects gallery this year. These look like guitars ostensibly hewn from gnarly branches into the images of mock-pantheist icons. And yet, so deliberately fake are their customised guitars that in fact they are simply outer casings for small electronic sound generators. What is genuine about Juneau/Projects/, however, is their sense of themselves as craftsmen. "I think having some kind of hands-on relationship with the materials we use is important," opines Sadler. "It's as if you're working with things physically that you discover your follow-up ideas, see where you can go next."

Both born in 1976, Duckworth and Sadler met while working at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery, and their first collaboration was as part of a would-be rock group in the 90s, playing at galleries. They are enthusiastic about the idea of being in a group. "We'd still probably be doing it now if someone had dangled a record contract in front of us," says Duckworth. This enthusiasm for the creative act, whether noticed or unnoticed, would become one of their established themes. They once played, undaunted, a two hour set in Walsall Art Gallery, to no more than two or three people wandering in and out of the room.

As the group drifted apart, Duckworth and Sadler moved on to a residency at Grizedale Arts in the Lake District. Ensconced in a forest setting, they swiftly became conscious of some of the ironies, anxieties and absurdities of city boys used to their technological comforts confronted with nature. "We'd both of us always lived in cities," says Sadler, "and it was the first time we'd seen a torch's light end and then there just be darkness. Even though we couldn't get a signal in the forest, we'd take our mobile phones out with us just the same."

"Thing is," says Duckworth, "you have this idea of a place like Grizedale as being one of absolute natural beauty but of course even the lakes and tarns are entirely managed and in a sense manmade."

Since then, they have exhibited and performed in New York, Japan and Lithuania (where they reprised their Walsall rock antics with full histrionics), and participated in group exhibitions like Hoxton Distillery's Group Shows Are A Waste Of Time in 2003 and solo exhibitions such as Motherf**king Nature at The Showroom, London.

They enjoy the juxtaposition of bucolic motifs and mock-heroic narratives involving mythical characters of the woods with real, modern life. They're currently working on a project in which participants are invited to devise their own contemporary heraldry. They also enjoy collaboration, especially with children. They recently set up two fictitious groups comprising schoolchildren, to engage in a Battle Of The Bands-style competition. Another project, entitled Ban This,



Emotional Modernism I (2007)



Aggressive Localism (2007)

between faux rustic musings and pieces reminiscent of the rough drafts of early electropop. Whether they count as sound art or simply fine music in its own right is a moot point; they can be taken as both. Duckworth and Sadler shudder at the very words 'sound art', having tried to commission some in their days working at Ikon and recalling some of the gruesomely generic submissions they had to endure. There is a sense of mobility about Juneau/Projects/. One of their projects involved driving a car out of Birmingham in a certain direction until it ran out petrol. What is mischievous about them is the question they beg about where their art is located. In the gallery? In the music, or in the invisible frame they put around the music? On the video documentation? In their performance? In the forest? At a bottom of a lake? The pair gently, perhaps wisely sidestep these questions.

"Mostly things just roll along and we don't really have time to make these sorts of evaluations – we hope that by doing the things we do these issues will work themselves out," concludes Sadler. □

Juneau/Projects/ participate in Joke, Satire, Irony And Serious Meaning at Europena Triennial of Small-Sized Sculpture, Slovenia, October 2007–January 2008. Their performance piece You Are The Music While The Music Lasts *runs at Loughborough University Art Projects between 14–28 November*

Instruments from Woodcraft Folk (2007)





saw them tour the country with a mobile studio and invite children to write and perform their own songs – the less "finished", the better. Eight-to-12 year olds, they found, yielded the best material. "You have this mixture of being wholeheartedly amused and wholeheartedly touched by the things they come up with. And it's quite often the kids who don't have any aspiration or experience who have the fewest inhibitions." They have just installed a ramp for skateboarders in the foyer of Urbis exhibition centre in Manchester which they intended as "an instrument of music composition", with contact mics installed in the ramps as they passed over them, which can then be stored and processed. As well as being a splendid alternative to loud Nu Metal, it chimes in with what they regard as the self-sufficient DIY culture of skateboarding, which Juneau/Projects/ manage to compare with morris dancing – a part of England's heritage. All of these undertakings query art's conventional taboos – look but don't touch, the primacy of the artist as supreme creator. For Juneau/Projects/, ideas of collaboration and teamwork are far more valuable, and ones which they stress to the kids with whom they work. "When they write those songs, they are their songs," says Sadler. This is implied in their very moniker, which is meant to suggest that they are not a self-contained duo, like Gilbert & George, but a potential springboard for the ideas and active contributions of others.

The Juneau/Records/ label is an outlet for their own recordings and collaborations, which range

Juneau/Projects/ in Japan



COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND F A PROJECTS, LONDON

Invisible Jukebox JG Thirlwell

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. Tested by Phil Freeman. Photography: Michael Schmelling

James George Thirlwell grew up in Australia, but decamped to London in 1978, where he hooked up with Steven Stapleton of Nurse With Wound, Einstürzende Neubauten, The Birthday Party, Lydia Lunch (who later became his girlfriend) and other artists on the fringe. He was soon releasing solo records under various Foetus names (Foetus Under Glass, Phillip And His Foetus Vibrations, You've Got Foetus On Your Breath, Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel), which hopped from genre to genre, encompassing noise-rock, big band jazz, string arrangements somewhere between Igor Stravinsky and Bernard Herrmann, and vocals that combined black-humoured wordplay, rampaging sexuality and deranged nihilism. Body horror recurs in his own label names, Self Immolation and Ectopic Ents, which "represents my art fatally attaching itself to the uterine wall of the culture", Thirlwell explains.

In the 1990s, his underground notoriety brought him to the attention of major labels. he became a sought-after remixer, turning tracks by Nine Inch Nails, Prong, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Pop Will Eat Itself and others into roiling seas of queasy noise. He has also launched a big band sleazy listening project Steroid Maximus and, more recently, his noirish instrumental unit Manorexia, a live version of which he brings to London this month featuring violinist Angharad Davies, among others.

These days, the Foetus name (and associated 'Clint Ruin' persona) has retreated into the background, with Thirlwell writing works for Kronos String Quartet and Bang On A Can, and scoring the animated TV show *The Venture Brothers*. The most recent Foetus release, *Damp* (Ectopic Ents), is a compilation of rare tracks from 2003–06. The Jukebox took place at Thirlwell's loft in Brooklyn, New York.

Radio Birdman
"Descent Into The Maelstrom"

FROM *RADIOS APPEAR* (SIRE) 1978

Is this Radio Birdman?

Yes. A similar surf-rock drumbeat is on your 1984 album *Hole*. Were they an influence on you in Australia?

Well, Radio Birdman were from Sydney and I grew up in Melbourne, and there were different vibes in each city. The Sydney scene was more oriented toward Detroit punk rock, like The MC5 and The Stooges, and that kind of rock 'n' roll type of thing, whereas in Melbourne, the scene was a bit more coming from the English [acts] like The Buzzcocks or Magazine. It was more art school. I never saw Radio Birdman, and I was not a huge devotee of their work, but I did see The Saints in Melbourne, and that was a pretty pivotal show. I think it was in 1977. Everyone was there – The Boys Next Door [later The Birthday Party] and all the associated people. When I was there around 1977–78, the scene in Melbourne was really small, and The Boys Next Door played a lot. I'd go to parties and they'd set up in the living room and play in someone's house. It was an amazing band, one of the best bands I ever saw. In front of very few people – I think it exploded a lot more after I left in late 78. But that Saints show was... first of all, they played way faster than anyone usually played – well, The Ramones had already come out by that point – but also it was pretty decadent. Chris Bailey started with a full bottle of Jack Daniels in his hand, and by the end of the set it was empty and he was on the ground making out with a girl while the band was steamrollering through their songs. Good times...

Was there a feeling of existing in a void in Melbourne?

I absolutely felt culturally isolated. My mother's Scottish and I would go back and forth a little bit, so I was aware of what was going on in the other hemisphere, and that was where I was drawn. Even as a kid, we'd stop in London and I'd go to Carnaby Street, and that was much more attractive to me.

CHBB
"Untitled [These Boots Are Made For Walkin']"

FROM *CHBB* (SELF-RELEASED CASSETTE) 1981

Oh, I don't know this. Who's this?

It's CHBB, the pre-Liaisons Dangereuses duo cassette-only project of ex-DAF member Chrislo Haas and Beate Bartel. What was your involvement with DAF?

I really liked the first DAF album [*Die Kleinen Und Die Bösen*], and I saw they were going to be playing with The Fall at [London rock club] the Marquee. It must have been 1979, because I was working at a record store and I had this badge that said 'I'm Ready For The 80s', which was the name of a Village People single. Seems so long ago now... 80s nostalgia's already over. They were a four-piece at that time and Chrislo was the keyboard player, played Korg MS-20s. After the show I went up to Chrislo, and as a greeting, I gave him this I'm Ready For The 80s badge, which he really liked. He didn't speak any English at that point, but we kind of hung out and were friends and stuff, and he stayed at my house a bunch.

Kip Tyler
"She's My Witch"

FROM *ROCKIN' BONES: 1950S PUNK & ROCKABILLY* (RHINO) 1958

I don't know anything about rockabilly. What is this?

It's Kip Tyler's "She's My Witch". I hear some of that same rockabilly psychosis in your vocal delivery – rockabilly and film noir, all combined into one, particularly on the 80s records.

I've never listened to rockabilly in my life. I've never been into it. It's a 'yet' for me. There's a big pile of yets – yet to get into – over in the corner. Country & Western is another, and The Grateful Dead. I'm sure I'll never get to that.

I was wondering about the creation of the persona that you had on record in albums like *Hole*, *Nail* and *Thaw*.

That's all part of me, Clint Ruin or whoever I am onstage. I stopped playing with bands about six years ago and I don't really inhabit that character. But it's definitely a side of me and it's an emboldening process, being up there.

When rock performers choose to be transgressive, they often do it along a fairly narrow continuum that runs from, say, Motörhead to GG Allin. But you went into horns, strings, upright bass...

It wasn't a decision that had to be made. I never started with the rock thing. Where I was coming from was very much out of creating from the ground up, with sound sources and using objects and tapes and, you know, I would make tapes in my bedroom using delays and synthesizers and stuff. It wasn't like I was playing in a punk band and I had to deviate away from that. I started from a place of using pause buttons on cassette machines, and ideas coming from way out and structuring them and getting what I had on tape, when I started going to the studio, in as expedient a way as possible. I think I really fell in love with the recording process, what you could do with sound.

When I moved to London it was an exciting time. Rob Young wrote that book on Rough Trade, and that's making me kind of nostalgic, because that's the time I was there. I started my own label, and a lot of it was about being in the studio, but also creating this object, the record. It was a piece of art, but it wasn't a limited edition. Everyone could have an original. I came up with lots of weird, convoluted ways of getting what I had in my head onto a piece of paper, so I could go through the process of building it up in a multitrack studio.



JG Thirlwell at home in Brooklyn, September 2007



It's not like with Reason software, where you just move stuff with the mouse.
No, the means now are totally different. The means now are great. But it's really democratised the process a lot, for good or bad. A lot of my ideas were coming from the first group I recorded with, Nurse With Wound. Steve Stapleton had a very liberated sense of what music was, and what a record was. I don't even know if there were necessarily any instruments in the studio. He'd say, 'Well, that chair's got a good sound.' And [we] would do something, and two weeks later I'd hear it and it was totally unrecognisable.

Lydia Lunch with The Anubian Lights
"Champagne, Cocaine & Nicotine Stains"
FROM *CHAMPAGNE, COCAINE & NICOTINE STAINS* (CRIPPLED DICK HOT WAX) 2002

Oh, that voice. This is from *Champagne, Cocaine & Nicotine Stains.*
Do you keep up with what Lydia's doing?
We're still very close, we still talk all the time.
What is she like as a collaborator?
For someone like me she's kind of a dream collaborator, because she just lets me do my thing. I would do my part and bring her in and say, 'This is what we're doing, this is how we do it', and she would come up with the words, and I would guide her with a finger, in the vocal booth, pitching her up or down if she was flat. Pretty much, she'd let me do my thing and she really liked what I did, so it was easy.
How did you two meet?
I was living with [The Birthday Party's] Mick Harvey at the time, and they had gone to New York and met Lydia there. Then Lydia moved to London, and I was aware of her work. I had *No New York* [Brian Eno's 1978 No Wave compilation featuring Lunch's group Teenage Jesus & The Jerks] from the day it came out. I had [Lunch's solo album] *Queen Of Siam*, too; I was a big fan of that album. At the time, I'd written a couple of press releases for The Birthday Party that were quite whimsical, maybe a bit fanciful. She'd read one of those and asked if I'd write something for her. She needed a one-page bio. So I had an opportunity to go over to her place, talk and gather information. And she didn't know anything about me. She didn't know I made music or anything. We started to become friends, and I think the first time we worked together she was going to do a show somewhere in Scandinavia. [The Birthday Party's] Rowland S Howard was going to play sax with her, but he dropped out, so I came and did it. And a little bit after that, romance blossomed.
You two and a couple of other people did a thing here in New York called The Immaculate Consumptive...
That was just three shows. It was myself, Lydia, Marc Almond and Nick Cave. It was actually suggested and conceived by Lydia. She was offered a performance at [New York's] Danceteria on Halloween in 1983. We created backing tracks for the show, each of us had a couple of songs and we collaborated on some songs. Lydia started and I played sax, we did a duet, I did some songs, maybe I did something with Marc, and it ended up with Nick. I think we may have done one ensemble piece as well. It was just the three shows, and I loved New York when I came here. It was the first time I'd been here in my adulthood. That was what brought me here and I just ended up staying.

Don Byron
"Powerhouse"
FROM *BUG MUSIC* (NONESUCH) 1996

That's [Raymond Scott's] "Powerhouse", but who's doing it?
It's Don Byron. You did it on the Steroid Maximus record *Gondwanaland* in 1992?
Yeah. Well, it was originally suggested by The Pizz, who's a friend of mine. We talked about doing that track, and he came out here and we did it at my studio and put it out under the name Garage Monsters. It came out as a one-sided 7" on Sympathy For The Record Industry, and on the other side there was an etching by Pizz, but it's also on the Steroid Maximus album. There's a lot of versions of "Powerhouse", and that sounds a lot like a Raymond Scott one but it's much cleaner. But we went back to some of the early Raymond Scott ones, studying his versions.
Was he an influence on your own cartoon scoring?
No, not really. You know, Raymond Scott, and what Carl Stalling did, the way he appropriated Raymond Scott, that's really ingrained into me from my childhood. The idea of motifs that last for a bar, or a bar and a half, or huge stylistic shifts from one place to another, that type of thing is a big influence on me, and I think it's a big influence on a lot of people, whether they know it or not.
How does all this impact your work on the *Venture Brothers* soundtrack?
I like to move around a lot, musically, but I also kind of treat the cartoon as if it was a live action thing. That gives it more weight and makes it more interesting to me.
And how did you get that job?
It actually came about through Steroid Maximus, because the show's creator, Chris McCulloch, had the [2002] album *Ectopia*, and that was a big inspiration

when he was writing the scripts and the pilot and so on. So they contacted me about scoring it, but I wasn't really interested. So they said, 'Well, what if we license this stuff from you, and we'll pay you as if you scored it?' I said, 'Hey, knock yourself out.' Cartoon Network liked it and picked it up, and they came back to me again and asked me if I'd score it.

What about Manorexia?

Manorexia's a whole different project. It's also instrumental, but it started from a different place. I wanted to make something really spacious and also wanted to make something dronelike, and it didn't really turn into anything dronelike at all, but something where a lot of the sounds I used so densely in my works which are heavily arranged – often I'll use a sound that's really fleeting, and it never really gets a chance to breathe and you can't listen to the timbres of it. I thought I wanted to use some of those sounds so you could really hear the timbres, and it evolved organically from that. I started the first album as an ongoing piece. I started from zero and it turned into this 60 minute piece that went from start to end.

Alice Coltrane
"The Firebird"

FROM *LORD OF LORDS* (IMPULSE!) 1972

I know this piece, but not this version.

It's Alice Coltrane, doing Stravinsky's *The Firebird*.

Stravinsky really shook things up in the 20th century. I don't know if that's considered the start of postmodern classical music or whatever, but he was one of the most important, in my head anyway. I'm an idiot when it comes to classical music. I listen to a lot of stuff and I read up about people's approaches to composing, but I never went to music school. I don't consider myself a musician, even. I guess I'm a musician, but I'm not an instrumentalist.

I learned a couple of instruments when I was a kid. I learned cello and percussion for a while, but I found it really difficult to read scores, and I kind of gave that up. And then, some years later, I became a self-taught musician, starting on bass guitar and moving to synthesizer. My approach to instruments was always, since I was in the studio, I would learn how to play the overdub, put the overdub on tape and then put the instrument back in the box. I'm not the sort of person to sit around on an instrument and get chops, or write on an instrument. I write in my head, and then sit down at the keyboard and work out that melody that's in my head.

So the strings on *Nail*, for example; are those actual strings, or is that a keyboard?

That's Fairlight. I've used lots of live strings, though. My latest live ensemble is a version of Manorexia, and that's a string quartet with piano, percussion and laptop. So I've been writing a lot for strings. I've always had a lot of strings on my records, but they've been sampled. And the Fairlight strings on [1985's] *Nail*, that was really the dawn of sampling technology.

Yeah, there are a couple of weird pitches on there.

I always do things out of the range of the instrument. That becomes a problem when you start rescoring things for live instruments. When I started in the studio, the ideas I was using – tape loops, pausing tapes and varispeed and things like that – by the time sampling had come in, sampling was really a way to organise what I'd been doing all along. I was always using other studios and was fairly itinerant, and there wasn't a way of gathering instruments until I moved here to this loft, and that's when I started my own studio. I got my own sampling equipment and started building from that.

Now I write for string quartet a lot. I wrote a piece for Kronos Quartet, and I've been doing this project with robot instruments, with an organisation called LEMUR – the League of Electronic Music-making Urban Robots. They commissioned a piece and they wanted live instruments added to it, so I added a string quartet to that. Now I'm expanding that project, writing more pieces for the robots and string quartet. I've got a guitar robot coming over next week for a bit of a writing session.

Ayumi Hamasaki
"Startin"

FROM *SECRET* (AVEX TRAX) 2006

Is this J-Pop?

Yeah, it's Ayumi Hamasaki, the Madonna of J-Pop. The production is so dense and complex, I thought you might be interested. Do you pay attention to pop, just from an observational standpoint?

Yeah, I'm very interested in hearing production techniques and what people are doing, and just the way things are mixed and compressed. It's an interesting time for that. I've recently been listening to a lot of psychedelia, too. It's something that, I don't know why, it bypassed me all that time. I go through phases – I'm always listening to soundtracks, but psychedelia I never paid attention to. But there were a lot of tricks with psychedelia, quirks in the arrangements, that you just don't hear in music now. It's kind of of-the-time, but to me it doesn't sound dated, it sounds very fresh.

Because the ideas didn't continue.

Exactly, they just kind of stopped at 1968. And that's exciting to me, to go through a street sale. Last weekend, I found this album by The Fallen Angels, who I'd never heard before, and looking at the album I couldn't tell if it was made now in a half-assed attempt to be retro and live in Williamsburg, or whether it was really from 1967. But I looked it up when I got home, and indeed it really was from 1967. So there's a lot of gems that are yet to be discovered.

White Zombie
"Thunder Kiss 65"

FROM *LA SEXORCISTO: DEVIL MUSIC, VOL 1* (GEFFEN) 1992

Oh, White Zombie, yeah.

I heard that you produced this record, and then the label rejected it. Is that what happened?

No, that's not true. I produced the demos that got them signed to Geffen, and I was supposed to produce that album, and through missed communications I kind of drifted off, and they got Andy Wallace. And I know I could have done such a better job. I just know what we did in the demos, and it's much better.

How did you know them?

I first heard them when they did [1987's] *Soul-Crusher*. I love that album. Of course, Rob [Zombie] hates that album. I don't know if they even acknowledge that album anymore. But I love that record, it's totally demented. So I knew them from then and I would go see them all the time, we hung out and were friends. And then Geffen started sniffing around and they asked me about producing them. We did a lot of preproduction, and finally we made the demos. They turned out great.

In the mid-90s, you did lots of remixes. Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nine Inch Nails, Prong, Pantera, etc. Were those just money gigs?

It was a weird time. Those just kind of fell in my lap and I didn't really nurture it. I wasn't really in the presence of mind to nurture it, because I was just too out there in my mental illness. It kinda started with a couple of remixes, one for EMF and one for Prong. And I think the Prong one was kind of a tipping point, because no one had really done Metal remixes then, and it was kind of a hit. Not a Top 30-type hit, but it definitely got out there, people heard it. In fact, they started playing it live like I did the remix, replicating my arrangement. So the Prong thing got a lot of A&R guys thinking about me, thinking it was a good way to get their Metal band to other people, so these things were coming along. And I'd listen to something and I wouldn't necessarily have to like what they'd done with it, but I could see the potential and what I could do with it, and that was interesting enough to me. Unfortunately, a lot of it was Metal, and that's not really what I wanted to be doing. I would rather have been doing Tricky or something at that point.

Duran Duran Duran
"Pilldriver"

FROM *VERY PLEASURE* (COCK ROCK DISCO/VERY FRIENDLY) 2005

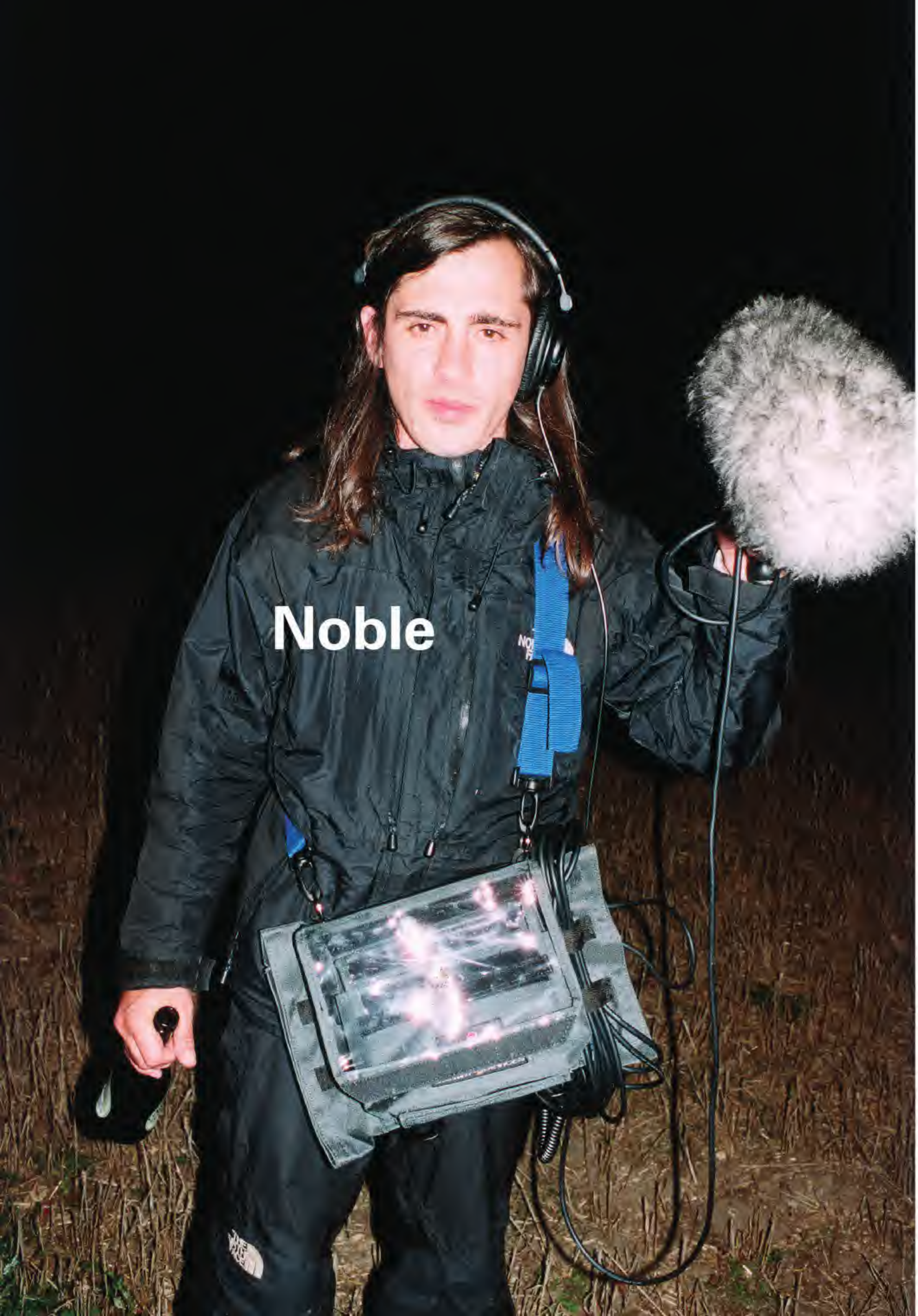
Oh, it's Duran Duran Duran. I know him. Ed [Flis], I think his name is. I've met him a few times in various places. I met him through Jason Forrest, who's kind of the king daddy in that scene.

It follows behind what you were doing with Foetus Art Terrorism. Do you hear that stuff as descended from your early drum programming work?

Well, no, I don't think there's a lineage necessarily from Foetus to this thing, 22 years later. I mean, maybe. I think that a lot of production techniques that I was using then that were extreme are kind of par for the course now. Times have changed.

Just the levels of bass on records now are insane...

Also, the use of distortion. It's everywhere now and people are abusing equipment, which they didn't used to in pop. I like some breakcore stuff, but a lot of it is such a barrage that it's a little hard to get a breather. There's no space in it. It's very exhilarating when you hear the first few minutes of it, but after a while it's like, yeah, I'm officially pummelled into submission. □ *This month JG Thirlwell participates in Christian Marclay's* Screen Play *as part of* The Wire *25 season, and presents Manorexia at London St Giles In The Field Church: see Out There*


Noble

Confidently straddling the divide between music and contemporary art, British artist, event curator and OR label boss Russell Haswell exploits the possibilities of digital processing to build dense, pummelling sound masses. Will Montgomery hears about audio archaeology, probing geopolitical pressure points with Florian Hecker on Xenakis's UPIC system and Haswell's will to extremity. Photography: Juergen Teller

salvage

Russell Haswell is one of the hidden movers in contemporary electronic music. Besides his under-documented solo work, his activity covers collaborations, performances, installations and curatorial roles. He is best known for his duo with Austrian digital extremist Florian Hecker – the pair's recent *Blackest Ever Black* album is a stunning work of "audio archaeology" (to borrow a phrase from computer music pioneer Curtis Roads's notes on the release). Using vintage hardware, it draws the work of Xenakis on graphic approaches to sound synthesis into the crowded field of contemporary electronic audio. It sounds like nothing else around at the moment, with one foot in the past and one reaching for the future. Before this, Haswell had been something of an invisible catalyst as a musician and 'curator' for more than a decade, appearing on numerous low-profile collaborative releases, turning in caustic DJ performances and programming several adventurous events.

"The first time I got a chance to generate and record sound, I started to play around with it," Russell Haswell recalls. "And it's carried on. The records are a by-product. The result of a process. It's like process art – I'm making process recordings. I'm interested in the role of visual artist as musician. Reading about Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, James Tenney and Michael Snow performing Reich's *Pendulum Music* at the Whitney in 69 is the route that I took to that work. My own aim in making sound is purely to make something that I haven't heard before. When I'm working on something and it starts to feel challenging and different to everything else I hear around me, then I take it further."

Describing himself as a "multidisciplinary artist" rather than a musician, Haswell has trodden a path to one side of the conventional solo CD based trajectory. He has only one solo CD to his name and often releases his work with collaborators, on compilations or on small runs of vinyl. That *Blackest Ever Black* was released on Warner Classics was one of the surprises of the year. Yet, despite the scattered nature of his output, he has made his intransigent musical presence powerfully felt.

Haswell's album *Live Salvage 1997–2000*, released on Mego in 2001, is a record of textured, intelligent noise work. Its uncompromising surface conceals a close attention to the sculpting of digital sound. It got an honorary mention in the Prix Ars Electronica of 2002 – not bad for a first full-length release – but Haswell seems initially to have been quite casual about putting together the disc. He explains that he'd never even had the gear to record himself live. It was only when pushed by Mego's Peter Rehberg that he tracked down recordings others had made and worked a 'salvage' operation on them to prepare them for release.

"This is the idea of salvage – some of the recordings were compromised to say the least, so a lot of pre-mastering was done," he recalls. "The recordings came from live concerts I gave on a single laptop: sample shredding, granular synthesis, direct-input and room feedback, mastering and filtering techniques and so on, all in real time. Apart from the people associated with Mego, and a few academics, I couldn't bear the way laptop musicians of the later 90s played 'live'.There were quite a few that were just playing files back – they were referred to as 'space-bar artists'."

Much of Haswell's live work has taken the form of collaborations. As well as Hecker and Peter Rehberg of the Vienna/Mego scene, he's worked with Merzbow's Masami Akita (with whom he made an album, *Satanstornade*, for Warp in 2002), Zbigniew Karkowski, Whitehouse, Yasunao Tone, Aphex Twin, and Lasse Marhaug & Kjetil Manheim. He's also contributed to many art exhibitions – often but not always sound based work – since the mid-90s. In that world he has had a particular association with Jake and Dinos Chapman, since they shared a living space in the early 90s. In 1998 he and Jake Chapman collaborated on a track for a book and compilation on Candy Records. The title, "Digital Rim Smear Discharge: Solar Anus", with its George Bataille reference, captures a shared fascination with pop-culture voicings of themes of transgression and extremity.

Over the same period he's been active in various curatorial capacities – planning the programme for two London All Tomorrow's Parties events and running the OR label, which releases music under the stern motto "Superior, Challenging, Critical".

As a teenager growing up in Coventry, Haswell learnt about the art collective Art And Language, whose UK wing grew out of Coventry School of Art

(now part of the university), where he studied in the late 80s. It is perhaps Art And Language's flexibility and constant questioning of process that set Haswell on the self-aware multidisciplinary path he has since followed.

"I was interested in Art And Language work when I was fairly young," he remarks. "Before I was even on a fine art course. When I was 15–16, I was going into the library at university, reading art catalogues and publications from the early 1970s. I liked the publications they'd made, like *The Fox* and all these other self-produced ones. It was an alternative to wall based art. I also liked *Acid Box* from 1969 or 1970 – an autodestructive plaster cube containing acid, made in the sculpture studios at Coventry Poly. They were a considerable influence at the time. As well as Gustav Metzger, Vito Acconci and contemporary artists such as Peter Fischli and David Weiss. I remember seeing their [1987] work *The Way Things Go* very early on in 1988. Florian Hecker and I collaborated with them a few years ago. We made a real-time dynamic stochastic synthesis soundtrack to their film of the Zurich sewer system, *Kanal*. This was shown on all four walls of a perfect 'white cube' space in Munich, the Musterraum."

Haswell's evolving musical appetites through the 90s set him off in pursuit of various kinds of hardcore sonic intensity, from extreme Metal to Techno. "When I was 20 I was going to see Confessor or some other Earache band in Birmingham and the same night going to see Altern8 in Coventry," he remembers. "I was always going to clubs. A Guy Called Gerald I saw live a lot. LFO. Altern8. Seeing that kind of music definitely had an effect on my thinking about bass. And I was blown away by going to see Carcass at around the same time. There was an early stage where rock people were playing in venues that didn't have big PAs and so it wasn't the kind of phenomenal audio experience that you'd later get in larger gigs and clubs. By that time a lot of bands like Carcass or Napalm had disbanded or changed style.

"I never played any instruments," he continues. "I just fucked about with them trying to get an interesting sound. I was always only interested in trying to create a sound rather than creating anything recognisable. I didn't take that avenue at all. Even when my friends were in bands – one of my oldest friends is Lee Dorian of Napalm Death – I didn't do anything like that."

Haswell's preferred method of working is two-track sound editing with no overdubs. In the early 1990s he was making innovative use of the playlist editor feature on Sound Designer II software. He namechecks dance figures Omar Santana, Chep Nunez and Shep Pettibone for the sharpness of their editing, though his own editing work was with very different music: Holger Hiller, Laibach, Bruce Gilbert and, in 1998, a minidisc-only release with the Gescom manifestation of Autechre.

Like many of those drawn to the border territory between noise and music, Haswell was caught up in the wave of innovative rock and noise coming out of Japan in the 90s. Unlike many such people, though, he pursued this in parallel with a passion for Techno. He has retained an interest in DJing (or "hard-disk jockeying", as he calls it) and remix work that sets him apart from many working at the harsher end of the digital music spectrum. In 2005 he booked Detroit Techno minimalist Robert Hood to play one of his All Tomorrow's Parties events alongside Pita and Autechre. Haswell has also channelled his eclectic enthusiasms into informal curatorial work for Blast First's legendary Disobey nights in the mid-90s, and for the PS1/MoMA Contemporary Art Center's summer concerts in 2000, when he put on Thomas Brinkmann and Yasunao Tone.

"In the mid- to late 90s I made my first visits to Japan," he reports. "Going to see Hanatarashi, Incapacitants, Pain Jerk, Merzbow, six-hour Fushitsusha concerts and so on. The Boredoms before that. The good ones. Pan Sonic, obviously, were important at the same time. Jeff Mills was particularly good then. I used to go to see Mills a lot. Playing on these amazing sound systems in some of the clubs. It was phenomenal, some of the sound pressure level and the dB level that was being achieved. Some of the Mills stuff and the brutality of his mixing in that period was awesome. So there were always these concurrent things with sound systems and PA systems that I was getting into. Club and rock music. Interesting electronic sound."

In our conversation Haswell frequently returns to the relationship between images and sound. Film has been a major influence. He admires (and has sought out and met) Walter Murch, most famous for doing the sound for the Coppola films such as *The Conversation*, the first two *Godfather* movies and *Apocalypse Now*. Haswell enthuses about Bernard Krause's electronic music for the same film, and for Donald Cammell/Nic Roeg's *Performance*. He also singles out Peter Zinovieff's 'electronic realisation' of Harrison Birtwistle's score for the Sidney Lumet film *The Offence*; Kubrick's use of Ligeti and Penderecki in *2001: A Space Odyssey*; and Tod Dockstader's music for Fellini's *Satyricon*, along with more overtly experimental films such as Michael Snow's *Wavelength*. Haswell and Hecker have recently completed a radical remix of Popol Vuh's *Aguirre* (a 12" to be twinned with Mika Vainio's version of another Popol Vuh/Herzog score, *Cobra Verde*).

The experimental art scenes of the 1960s and 70s are of great importance to Haswell (who was born in 1970). He often speaks of older figures who have acted as mentors, models or, eventually, collaborators. The computer music theorist Curtis Roads, who supplies the sleevenote to *Blackest Ever Black*, is a case in point.

"Roads is great," says Haswell. "I think anyone wanting to make any kind of electronic or computer music should have a copy of his *Computer Music Tutorial* [1996] – it's the Bible. Some of the books he's edited are essential. *Composers And The Computer*, for example, includes the Xenakis text "Music Composition Treks" [1985], which is unobtainable elsewhere. Roads was also for around 20 years the editor of *Computer Music Journal*, some of which was incredibly interesting to me – like gold dust – and some of which was completely over my head. I've had the good fortune to be able to hang out with him at various times in the last ten years or so. The time I've spent with him has always been very educational and informative. Autechre and I got him to support them in LA, and they then had him back for their ATP. Plus we played alongside each other at the Sonic Arts Research Centre in Belfast, with its 360 degree diffusion system and steel grated floor.

"There are lots of people like this that I've chased up and got to meet and collaborate with, one way or another," he adds. "These slightly older people who've been in the game for a long time can be inspirational. Yasunao Tone, for example. I remember when Oval first appeared and then *Systemisch* came out [in 1994] and was quite popular. Well, Yasunao and his works with CD and players surpass all that stuff and it certainly isn't ear candy – or maybe it is for me! I got to meet him in New York when I was living there in the late 90s and we became good buddies."

Another arena of experimental activity that interests Haswell – and which feeds into his live 'diffusions' with Hecker – is the public multimedia event, as pioneered by Xenakis with the famous Philips Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958 and the series of *Polytopes* in the 1960s and 70s. He is particularly enthusiastic about the electrical engineer Billy Klüver, who set up some legendary large-scale collaborative performances in the 1960s and 1970s.

"I got to know Billy Klüver in New York just before he died," he explains. "He was amazing. I knew of Klüver's work with EAT and the Osaka Expo 70 pavilion, but the 9 Evenings: Theatre And Engineering was of more interest to me [a 1966 event held in New York that featured a group of avant garde artists including John Cage, David Tudor and Öyvind Fahlström]. Rauschenberg's *Open Score* and Frank Stella playing tennis with adapted rackets with contact mics and FM transmitters in the handle.

"And in the other projects over those evenings I was interested in the use of new technologies such as infra-red cameras. I love the idea of technicians and engineers working and collaborating with artists. This should happen more, especially here in the UK."

Live realisations of *Blackest Ever Black* share the ambition of such large-scale public events in which art and technology interact. Synaesthesia, the overlapping of sense impressions, is a word that comes up frequently as Haswell speaks about this work. The recent live events have often used high-intensity laser lightshows alongside the restlessly intense, kaleidoscopically shifting sound patterns that he and Hecker produce.

The music is based around sessions recorded during a short residency at CCMIX (Centre de Création de Musique Iannis Xenakis) in Paris. Haswell and Hecker had each long hankered after an opportunity to work on the UPIC, a device with a graphical interface designed by Xenakis for the realisation of electronic music – a kind of electronic drawing board. At CCMIX they worked on one of only three extant examples of a real-time version of UPIC (which never went into commercial production).

"There are obviously lots of people trying to be extreme and failing miserably. The list is too long. It hurts my head to even think about it"



The UPIC user draws images (known as 'arcs') onto the input device which the machine then translates into sound. As well as making their own abstract drawings, occasionally while blindfolded, Hecker and Haswell traced various potent visual images, using such contemporary pressure points as the Madrid terrorist atrocity, resonant 20th century images such as the geodesic dome and the DNA spiral, and some deliberately banal images to offset the more loaded ones. He describes the end result, translated into sound, as a "massive moving and morphing collage of our times".

"It was immediately hands-on with the UPIC," says Haswell. "We tried to use it as much as we possibly could in the time we had. We got to grips with it fairly quickly and started to experiment quite heavily with it, employing techniques that we understood had been used already. Then we started to work against that as well. It's totally unique. There are lots of software imitations but they don't render the same results. It's also a studio that lots of people have used over the years through doing residencies there. But they simply didn't use the UPIC. Either because it was just too daunting for them, because they didn't know what it was or because they absolutely don't have any progressive thoughts in their heads and consequently make quite boring music."

I suggest that translating visual images is really just another kind of random input – a conceptual game that only gains significance through the information supplied alongside the audio material.

"This is true," agrees Haswell. "That's why you play the game to the extent of having sleevenotes on the record. You're not hiding this fact. It's also the case that the listener *hears* the result. We were very selective about what material we used. You draw an arc and if you play the score at that moment you're going to decide whether you like the result or not. And then you change and transform or delete and start again. Any kind of image that incorporated some kind of geometric imagery – lines, angles within the arcs – rendered interesting results. We started to go where the most interesting results took us. To apply these results into the machine seemed not to be what other people had been doing with it before."

The project digs deep into territory opened up by Xenakis but does it with ears that are absolutely attuned to the contemporary. What's striking about the CD is, despite the abrasive quality of the sounds, its feeling for structure. This is no mindless noise-blast. The music is organised and the after-the-fact editing makes itself strongly felt. The same applies to the recent performances. Haswell compares the live shows to 'traditional' diffusions in that the music is assembled in advance (though each is unique, with different configurations of the material recorded at CCMIX). The events are all highly site-specific – the *Blackest Ever Black* material has been performed in such diverse environments as university music departments and Barcelona's Sonar Festival. Haswell likes to think of them as "temporary public sculptures" – artworks that stay in place until the music runs out or the laptop crashes.

I ask him about the idea of extremity. The title *Blackest Ever Black* is almost comical in its invocation of an extreme, after all. Haswell values the term, insisting that the important thing is not to be distracted by the failings of others who court artistic extremity, and to keep pursuing the kinds of excessive physical and emotional experience he's looking for.

"There are obviously lots of people trying to be extreme and failing miserably," he rails. "The list is too long. It hurts my head to even think about it. Some people, though, aren't like that. They really *are* fucking extreme. You go to see these things and think, fuck, that *really was* extreme. The thought that your own concert could cause that kind of response is quite exciting and fits into my interest in making large-scale spectacle. Most of the people who come to our concerts are amazed. Overwhelmed. We're trying to push them somewhere they've never been before. New experience is all that anyone's striving towards. An alternative to whatever anyone feels is mundane in their lives. And to create truly great works. Bigger and better and more exciting ones." □ *Haswell & Hecker's* Blackest Ever Black *is out on Warner Classics. Their remix of Popol Vuh's* Aguirre *will be released on 12" later this year, twinned with Mika Vainio's remix of* Cobra Verde. *Websites: haswellstudio.com, www.itsaor.net/*

Interplanetary craft

The melancholy of Rothko's paintings and the celestial harmonies of planetary motion feed into the sombre, elemental guitar style of Loren Connors. Here, he talks about his youth spent strumming amid the urban squalor of New Haven; his creative partnerships with Jandek, Alan Licht and wife Suzanne Langille; and how he fights through pain to find a music of the quiet universe.
Words: Marc Masters. Photography: Mark Mahaney



Loren Connors at home in Brooklyn, August 2007



"It doesn't so much flow through me now," says guitarist Loren Connors. "It comes out more mysterious – it kind of tiptoes out. I'm not sure why, but it's gotten even more sparse, and the melodies within that sparseness are not as blatant as before. They're still there, but they come out in a quieter kind of way." Connors is sitting on a bed in the Brooklyn apartment he shares with wife and collaborator Suzanne Langille. On the walls hang huge, collage-like portraits of a model, which he creates through his own process of photography and photocopying. Wedged into the opposite corner is his makeshift recording studio, centred around the Tascam four-track recorder he has used for two decades and with which he crafted his latest LP, *The Hymn Of The North Star*.

"It's like the music of the spheres, the music of the quiet universe out there in the black," he says of the album's distant tones. "That title came to mind and sounded good, so that's what I picked," he adds. Just as his music emerges in bare, minimal streams, Connors often speaks in short sentences with succinct explanations. But he is by no means reticent. With his perpetual grin and eager cadence, he sounds like he has figured some things out and finds extraneous words to be obstacles in the way of basic truths. Such clarity has surely helped him create music so strikingly direct and devoid of unnecessary flourishes. "I can't read music," he admits. "I don't even know that much about music. So I can only do it the way I do it. I just play."

To understand the power of Connors's simplicity, one need only look to his primary artistic influence, painter Mark Rothko. The way Rothko imbued bold blocks of colour with layers of meaning made him one of his first inspirations, and he remains a guiding force. "I like the fact that he could just take two or three colours and make a painting out of it," he says. "And [he showed that] you don't have to know how to paint or a lot about painting to do it. You could just use simple techniques to do it. I think that's similar to the way I play guitar. I've never really learned guitar, I don't know that much about playing. I like playing the way I do and don't really want to learn more."

One of his regular collaborators, *The Wire* contributor Alan Licht, recalls watching Connors repeatedly draw a female face on envelopes while the two were on tour in France, and likens it to the way he often returns to the same notes and chords. This painterly approach explains Connors's affinity for slow, patient playing, doling out notes like thoughtful brushstrokes and contemplating the nuances of each sound fully before moving on. "I've played some stuff that was kind of fast, but I've always been more attracted to slow stuff, the minimalism of it and the power of it," he says. "I'm not sure what else it is about slow music that I like. It just hits the right chord in me."

Connors actually began his adult life as an art student, with visions of becoming a painter. "I didn't think you could make a life out of music, but I knew painters that had made a life out of that, so I wanted to be a painter," he recalls. "But my scholarship at art school got cut off and that took away some of the incentive. And I figured out that my music was more unique than my painting style. My painting style was really taken from Rothko, but the music sounded more unique to me. I hadn't really heard much other stuff like it."

Three decades after he first began making records, there still isn't much other stuff like the music of Loren Connors. Through scores of releases (an exact count is nearly impossible, but it's more than 80), his guitar style has survived many situations while retaining a singular feel, what he once called "that mysterious sense that could lead to a feeling of isolation". Like the masterful guitarists he has played with, such as John Fahey and Derek Bailey, Connors has the rare ability to at once sound familiar and new. "I'm not the type of person that can repeat something I've just played, or something I've done in the past," he asserts. "Whatever I play once, usually that's it. Well, I can repeat myself when I get lazy, so I have to watch out for that. But I'll catch it before I put it out. I'd never put out a record like that."

Recent archival releases affirm Connors's claim. Last year Family Vineyard issued *Night Through*, a three disc collection offering 28 years' worth of singles, compilation tracks and other non-album works. Impressively diverse, the set traces many of his phases – from early pieces based on his love of rustic blues, to improvisational forays he honed in the New York loft jazz scene, to the atmospheric, reverb-drenched electric guitar he favoured in the 1990s. "I like everything on there," he says. "There was lots of other stuff I liked that I couldn't put on there because of time constraints, but another guy in Europe [Heathen Imprint's Sander Wildeboer, who recently released a Connors tribute CD-R] sent me an alternative set of three CD-Rs with all the stuff I couldn't include, and that stuff I like a lot too."

This month sees the release of *As Roses Bow: Collected Airs 1992–2002*, a double CD culled from ten different albums. The set features pieces that Connors calls "Airs" in tribute to the traditional Irish songform that's part of his heritage. Melodic and even dreamy, these tracks again find him massaging simple tones and phrases repeatedly, turning them over in his hands like a solitary scientist examining samples in a laboratory. Grouping pieces under themes is a longtime habit for Connors. He has titled albums with dedications to Rothko, Fahey and William Faulkner. To others he has assigned concepts like a fictional woman (1994's *Moonyean*), the ocean (2006's *Sails*) and 11 September 2001 (*For 9/11/01*, a self-released CD-R recorded on that fateful day and later included on *Night Through*). Because all of his music is improvised, these concepts usually arise after the playing is complete. "I just let it happen. I don't try to shape it beforehand," he says. "All these names come later. It always takes a little while to figure out a name based on what it feels like and what it sounds like. I start to see common things between the stuff that I played."

One might imagine that the forward-looking guitarist would not relish sifting through past work, but the opposite is true. "Every so often I pull my old stuff out and listen to it," he explains. "I like to hear how rough I was a long time ago, how primitive I was. It brings up a lot of memories. Some good stuff and some bad stuff."

Born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1949, Connors began accumulating musical memories at an early age. His mother, Mary Mazzacane, worked as a classical singer. "She did operas in Connecticut, these gigantic opera shows on big stages. And she used to bring me to funerals and weddings where she would sing, and I would suck the whole thing

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up," he recalls. "It was a big influence on me. I listen to her voice and the way I play, and it's the same thing, the same way of hitting notes." Connors played violin as a child, which taught him the vibrato technique he would carry into his guitar work, then took up trombone and guitar in high school, playing bass in a rock 'n' roll group. He quickly became a fan of the blues, especially the bottleneck slide of Robert Johnson and Blind Willie Johnson, which he hoped to evoke on acoustic guitar despite never actually learning the technique. "I used to sit in my bedroom as a teenager with my bass guitar and play along to the records I had," he says. "But I never really did that with guitar."

After studying art at the University of Cincinnati, Connors returned to New Haven in 1976, moving into a tenement-like artists' warehouse on Daggett Street. "It was really bad there," he recalls. "Holes in the floor, gas leaks everywhere, drugs in the neighbourhood, burglaries every night. People didn't have doors or windows, or the doors would just be swung wide open, and the windows too, with blankets hanging in them. People would have bonfires on the floors of their apartments." Connors would often sit in front of his art as he played with the shades drawn, his environment strongly influencing his music. Fearful of creating holes in his creaking floor, he also found himself becoming more careful about where he put his fingers on the strings.

To escape this squalor, Connors periodically travelled to New York in the late 70s to play with John Zorn, Elliott Sharp and Henry Kaiser. They returned the favour by playing in Connors's loft, which he dubbed the Chapel Arts Center. At the same time, he recorded a series of LPs dubbed "Unaccompanied Acoustic Guitar Improvisations", which he assembled and released on his own Daggett label, even volunteering on the assembly line where they were pressed. Heard in light of his later work, those records can sound shockingly primitive. Connors's abrupt string plucks are raw and sometimes painfully intimate. But even when harsh or uncomfortable, the music is always gripping, capturing the desolation of his surroundings, especially when accompanied by his eerie hums and moans, inspired by the dogs that howled outside his window. "Those were always involuntary," he says. "They just came out."

In fact, Mazzacane, the surname he used for much of his career, is an Italian word meaning, he claims, someone who "kills dogs with a club and takes money for it". His contentious relationship with dogs led him to eventually phase out Mazzacane and adopt Connors from his Irish grandmother's side. "Dogs don't like me. They know about my name, I guess," he smiles. "You wouldn't believe how often I've gotten bit by dogs – they constantly do it. Just recently a dog went after my ankles." He soon stopped using his voice, instead opting to work with singers. "I love singers. They can really communicate to people," he enthuses. "I wish I could

"The medicine makes my music more energetic. My hands move faster than normal when I take the pills. It also affects my brain activity and makes my music a little more lively"

do that, but I can't sing a note." One of his most fruitful collaborations was with Kath Bloom, who steered his playing into more traditional folk territory. The pair would practise in a local cemetery, influenced by "Billie Holiday and Lester Young, trying to get the same kind of thing that they had playing together". Four Connors-Bloom albums will be released next year as two double CD sets on the Australian label Chapter Music.

After their collaboration ended, Connors went on a three-year musical hiatus in the mid-80s, the only extended downtime of his career. "I didn't know where to go with it," he confesses. "I didn't really know anyone who was doing my kind of music. I didn't even know if it was happening anywhere anymore." When he came back, it was on electric guitar, which has been his primary instrument ever since. "There it is," he answers, when asked if he still plays acoustic, pointing to an old instrument on the wall. "It's been hanging there for like three or four years. It has a broken string on it and I didn't really want to string it up again, so I just left it there." In the late 80s, Connors began collaborating with his wife, the singer Suzanne Langille, releasing records on another self-run label, St Joan, as well as having a child with her. "It made me more laidback," he says of raising his son, who is now 20. "I don't know if that's the right word, but it made me more appreciative of other things. Less into myself, more into other people."

Inspired by his love of Guitar Slim, Connors started recording under the name Guitar Roberts and began returning to New York to play. "I came down here and figured out that the stuff that I got into in the late 70s was still going," he says. "I was surprised that it was still happening here."

In 1991, Connors and Langille moved to New York, where they have lived ever since. The long walks he took around the city, soaking in the faces he saw and the streets he traversed, inspired album titles like *Hell's Kitchen Park* and *Ninth Avenue* (released on yet another homemade imprint, Black Label). "I've met a lot of people here, and it's made my music more lively and diversified," he says. "Connecticut was more laidback, so my music was more folky, and when I got down here it got more city-like, more urban. It got more rock based, at least for a while. And then I calmed down again. I feel much safer now in this apartment and in New York."

Clearly, the many environments Connors has encountered on his winding journey have affected his work. But, he claims, "I think my music is off on its own now and does what it wants to do. It doesn't really depend on what's going on in my life anymore." That's a rather stunning statement, considering what Connors has to deal with on a daily basis. In 1992, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a condition he suspects was created in his New Haven space. "A guy next door to me used to burn plastic, and it stunk like plastic all the time," he says. "I think that's what gave me Parkinson's. It takes time for that stuff to develop. I lived there when I was 25, and by the time I was in my forties I had Parkinson's." At first, he reacted as anyone would. "I was depressed as hell," he admits. "I thought I would have to be in bed for years. But it's more of a nuisance now. I don't shake anymore – my hands are steady. It's just slowness of movement."

To combat the condition, he says he is "filled up with pills every day". The medicine affects his walking, and recent falls have caused painful breaks in his wrists and hip. "It hurts sometimes when I bend it and it's a little swollen because there are metal rods in it," he says, pointing to his right wrist. "I had a pretty big bump on it a couple of months ago but it went away. It kind of looks like a mess now, but it works. It doesn't really affect my playing." Connors no longer leaves his apartment without a walker and wrist guards. "I can't afford to break anything again," he declares. "I went down a couple of times since, and the guard definitely protected my hand. I have good balance, but I don't want to deal with falling down again." Remarkably positive, he is quick to point out upsides in his situation. "The medicine makes my music more energetic," he says with a smirk. "It makes my fingers stay on the strings. Without the pills, my fingers have a tendency to slide off. And my hands move faster than normal when I take the pills. It also affects my brain activity and makes my music a little more lively. Everyone who plays an instrument should take these pills."

Clearly, Connors hasn't let his ailments slow him down. Since moving to New York, he has generated reams of releases, many of them in collaboration with rock improvisors like Jim O'Rourke, Darin Gray and Lee Ranaldo. "It surprised me to find out my stuff was so close to rock 'n' roll," he says. "I don't know what to consider myself nowadays. Blues is the closest to what I'm doing, but I don't really fit into that anymore. Now I'm more of an avant garde type, I guess." As a collaborator, Connors's playing is wonderfully complementary, maintaining its distinct character while bending and weaving to fit his compatriots. "I'm always listening to what the other person is doing. If not, it can come out like a war between the guitars," he says. "You just hope that both people are able to play their own thing together, kind of separate but together, in a way." He only has one preference when collaborating: "I like to start off and set the pace. I guess I'm an alpha male or something. After that I'm pretty open, but I like to start the mood myself."

Connors offers a long list of favourite partners, among them Jandek and John Fahey. "Jandek is a really great person," he enthuses. "He plays pretty similarly to the way I do. It's more structured, but he's getting more into improvisation. He's a lot better than he thinks he is, a lot more intuitive and resourceful than he gives himself credit for." A year before Fahey's passing in 2001, Connors recorded with him at The No-Neck Blues Band's Harlem studio (an excerpt is included on *Sails*). "We just started playing, we didn't discuss anything beforehand," Connors recalls. "He sat in the middle of the room with his electric guitar, and I had my echo and reverb on, and just went at it for like an hour and a half or so. I walked around, and he sat on a chair the whole time. I was kind of prowling around him."

Another fruitful collaboration is with poet Steve Dalachinsky. Connors spent time in the mid-80s writing poetry (even winning an award in Japan for one haiku), so the partnership is a natural one. "Steve reads poetry when we play, but he's a real musician. His poetry has a real beat to it, a real rhythm," he says. "Most poets are really just writers, but he approaches it like an instrument, from an improvised music standpoint." Connors's closest artistic partner remains Alan Licht. "We've played the most over the past 15 years together. His playing has changed, mine has changed – we've changed together," he attests. "We have a telepathic connection. I know what he's going to do before he does it, and even if I don't know what I'm going to do, he seems to know what direction I'm heading in."

"Lately," says Connors, "I have been working on these pieces here," pointing to the large black and white portraits on his walls. "They're photographs, which were then Xeroxed and drawn over, and then photographed, and then Xeroxed again. I've been doing it most of the last year. I spend more of my time now making visual art than music. With music, I just pick up the guitar and do it and it's over."

Film is another inspiration. Last year, Connors included a 36 minute piece on *Sails* in which he mixed guitar with dialogue and natural sound from *Man Of Aran*, Robert Flaherty's 1934 documentary about a fishing community off the west coast of Ireland. His mood-drenched music has always felt ripe for soundtracks and he recently improvised a score to the 1926 Japanese silent film *A Page Of Madness*. "I've been watching it over and over and playing music along to it. I respond to the pictures and it makes me play a bit different," he says. "I used the movie to tell me what to do, sort of like the way a piano player used to play along with a silent movie." The final piece will be included on a forthcoming Family Vineyard DVD, which spans most of Connors's history and includes collaborations with O'Rourke, Licht, Jandek, Langille and Chan Marshall aka Cat Power.

Connors shows no signs of slowing down, despite his reduced mobility. only this past summer, he trekked to Houston to perform in the Rothko Chapel, the closest he could come to collaborating with his idol. "It was definitely the experience of my life, something that I'll remember forever," he beams. "The acoustics weren't that great, and the amp I was playing through wasn't even that great. I had a good time playing anyway, just being in front of his paintings."

True to his tireless spirit, Connors remains hopeful that his music will someday reach a wider audience. To that end, many of his 90s albums will soon be available as digital downloads. "I've tried to make things more commercial, but it never works out," he says. "My "Airs" pieces are pretty accessible, so we'll see when they come out. I'd love to break out to the general public more, to have them hear it. Because whenever I play my stuff for people that know nothing about music, they always like it." □ As Roses Bow: Collected Airs 1992–2002 *and* The Hymn Of The North Star *are out now on Family Vineyard*





Sonny Simmons in New York, September 2007



The crying game

During his 73 years, Sonny Simmons has played saxophone with jazz's greatest, including John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, and his stirring take on the 1960s New Thing was enriched by his pioneering use of the un-jazz cor anglais. Andy Hamilton meets the saxophonist on the eve of a collaboration with the UK's newest free noise exponents. Photography: Mark Mahaney

"I was labelled a free player when I first came to New York. Ornette Coleman and free jazz, that was no problem for me – I would jump on that train too, and have a good time." But Sonny Simmons has a curious ambivalence towards the free jazz that made his name. "I got sucked into the avant garde when I was a young cat. I said, 'This is the lick, I'm going with it.' But actually, I'd just as rather just play beautiful melodies, with my own compositions, with a groove. That's my true heart. Avant garde and free, man, that's cool, but it only goes so far... People want to hear a snap," he asserts, clicking a groove with his fingers. Simmons has done a lot of free playing, so he must have a lot of feeling for it? "Of course I do – if I'm with the right musicians, I can stretch out and play all my ideas within a parameter. But now that I'm in the autumn of my years, I want to come inside again – I've been outside a long time."

There's more than one simple metaphor here. "Outside" also refers to being homeless, busking on the streets, of people being so unaware of his work that they think he died in the 1970s. The saxophonist confides these thoughts during an interview in the cluttered, homely apartment on Tenth Avenue, Manhattan that he shares with his partner, video artist Janet Janke, and her two lively cats – a couple of minutes from the burgeoning nightlife of Ninth Avenue with its new efflorescence of eating places. Sonny speaks quite slowly, with gravitas, in a deep Southern drawl. He's an imposing presence, his tall and gracious bearing belying his 73 years. You sympathise when he says that now, what he wants is "a dignified job for a dignified wage". He talks excitedly about his recent association with Norwegian saxophonist and composer Jon Klette, who also runs Jazzaway Records – "he revived my career," Simmons explains – and about his upcoming UK tour, his first at full length, with Scottish trio Tight Meat, featuring *The Wire*'s David Keenan.

Huey 'Sonny' Simmons was born in Sicily Island, Louisiana, in 1933. His father was a travelling Baptist preacher who also practised the benign art of voodoo. He was a drummer, and gave Sonny his first instrument, a squeeze-box accordion, at the age of six. He played it in church every Sunday, but took no music lessons. "I came from a very musical family, but no one pursued it – I just received the genes!" These genes have also contributed to his longevity as a performer – one of his grandmothers lived to 100. His early love of jazz came from listening on the radio to Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and classical music. He also followed blues, Western Swing and rhythm and

“Playing tenor saxophone
put meat and potatoes on
the table, so I stayed with
rhythm and blues”



blues – which influenced him as they did fellow Southerner Ornette Coleman.

In 1944 the family moved to Oakland, California. Simmons described it as "a fat-ass town", rich with great entertainment. It was the home of the "late, great Black Panthers", as he calls them. Though he didn't participate in the political agenda of the New Thing, he respected Black Power: "I knew all those guys, we grew up together – Huey P Newton, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis. They wanted me to be a part of it. I was ready for the revolution. But I said, 'No – when you put on big rallies, I'll be the band', you dig?"

Starting on tenor sax at the age of 16, in 1949 he experienced a bebop epiphany when he saw Charlie Parker with Jazz At The Philharmonic in Oakland: "Bird filled up this whole auditorium [with his sound] – I never heard such beautiful music coming out of a saxophone. It changed my life." He tried to sneak backstage to speak to the master, but Parker, who was doing very well by this time, was whisked away in a long Cadillac limo. "He had on this white suit like in the Charlie Chan movies," Simmons recalls.

In the early 1950s he began working with dance bands, and with bluesmen such as Lowell Fulson, Amos Milburn and T-Bone Walker. "Playing tenor saxophone... put meat and potatoes on the table, so I stayed with rhythm and blues," he has explained. It also gave him a rich musical background, he believes. In Oakland he hooked up with Texan reeds-player William 'Prince' Lasha. Lasha was a boyhood companion of Ornette Coleman, and had come to the West Coast about 1954. "He's quite a charmer!" Simmons says, also implying a certain deviousness. In the later 1950s he formed several groups, often with Lasha. Their partnership finished in the 70s, and Lasha now lives near San Francisco, but has worked quite recently with Odean Pope.

In 1958, Ornette Coleman's first recordings appeared, on the Los Angeles label Contemporary. "That's how I began to associate with beautiful Lester Koenig," says Simmons. When he first met the visionary producer in 1961, Koenig said he had to surrender the music rights – which was common then – and Simmons walked away. "But Lester Koenig was no crook," he adds. Lasha and Simmons eventually signed a contract for two records, and in November 1962, *The Cry* appeared. With Simmons on alto sax and cor anglais, and Lasha on flute, plus two basses, it was an unusual line-up. Bassist Gary Peacock was a West Coast player who soon went on to record with Albert Ayler. "I first met Gary in the early 60s, when the flower kids was about to flourish – with all that psychedelia, you dig?" Simmons explains. "He fit the bill with what we were doing musically... I prefer the olden days – it was more loose and free."

In April 1963 Simmons and Lasha arrived in New York and hooked up with Sonny Rollins during the latter's freest period. They joined the tenor player and his rhythm section of Henry Grimes and Charles Moffett for a gig at the Village Gate, and within five months were established as leading figures of the avant garde. Rollins wanted to feature Simmons on a session for RCA, with Don Cherry and Billy Higgins, but a dispute with the producer resulted in the project being cancelled. Simmons hung out a lot with Rollins, and was pushed into a freer area as a result, he says. "We'd go out into the forest at Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey," he continues. "He'd get me up at 5am, and we'd stay there till 5pm practising, you dig it? I couldn't believe that this cat chose me out of all the young cats in New York. He said to me, 'Man, you got a style I like, I want to learn how you do these fast moves!' Newk [Rollins] was the greatest. At that period he was going towards the avant garde."

Rollins wanted to learn from the free players, though he didn't continue with that trajectory. "Newk was a very deep cat," Simmons affirms. He did record with Eric Dolphy, for whom he wrote the jazz standard "Music Matador". "He treated me very royally, like all the great artists did at that time. I learned so much from them," Simmons comments. Then in the summer of 1963, Lasha's familiarity with Coltrane led to *Illuminations* with the Elvin Jones-Jimmy Garrison Sextet, in which Simmons plays cor anglais on Tyner's "Oriental Flower". This album gave him his first major exposure, and the direction his career would have taken, had he continued to work with such players and been supported by comparable production, can only be surmised.

But shortly after, Sonny headed back to California, stressed out by the constant pressure of trying to make it on the New York scene. He missed out on 1964's 'October Revolution' – the Jazz Composer's Guild, the birth of ESP-Disk, and Coltrane embracing the avant garde. But he had progressed enormously. "So much shit happened to me then, it was like a whole decade in one year," he says.

Returning to New York in 1966, he cut two legendary records for ESP with trumpeter Barbara Donald, *Staying On The Watch* and *Music From The Spheres*. Bebop trumpeter Benny Harris had recommended to Donald that she contact Sonny. She became a student of his and then his wife. "I had a lot of problems with the cats in New York because here's this beautiful white lady standing on the bandstand in a miniskirt with a black musician, which had never happened in the history of the music," Simmons has explained. These albums are full-on, declamatory free jazz, with John Hicks on the customary ropey upright piano. But "Zarak's Symphony", named for his son, begins with a groove that persists loosely throughout; its repeating chord sequence is reminiscent of a Blue Note number. The sound is one of the label's better efforts.

I was going to call this his 'heroic period', but then with Sonny Simmons, all periods are heroic. In 1969 he moved with his family up to Woodstock to join the counterculture. He lived in a commune with Juma Sutan, Sunny Murray and others. Juma was a conga player who worked with Jimi Hendrix. Before this Woodstock period, he and Hendrix had lived near to each other in Manhattan, and one time, Hendrix asked him over to play cor anglais. He didn't particularly like saxophone, Sonny recalls, continuing, "I loved Jimi Hendrix. I think of him as a great innovator of the rock movement. At Woodstock in 68, I think it was, we featured Jimi with some avant garde musicians – we got a chance to play one date during that summer. With all this psychedelia, Woodstock was a great circus."

After 1969, having returned to the West Coast, Simmons made outstanding recordings for Arhoolie (*Manhattan Egos*) and Contemporary – *Firebirds*, *Rumasuma* and *Burning Spirits*. In San Francisco, he worked with trumpeter Dewey Johnson and saxophonist Noah Howard. The West Coast has been described as a research laboratory of the avant garde through the 60s, but to gain exposure you had to go East. Simmons felt that to do so he would have to leave his family behind, so he stayed on, but he's said that he hated California.

When Lester Koenig died of a heart attack in 1977, Simmons was affected deeply. He felt that his dreams had evaporated. "I didn't play any more, I thought my future in music was over," he comments. Family and personal problems took him to his nadir. For 15 years he was homeless, busking on the streets of San Francisco, strung out on heroin. He still recorded infrequently, although most of the material is unreleased. The money for the compelling *Global Jungle* (1982) was put up by the cellist Kirk Heydt. But it seemed like Simmons's glory days were long past.

The development of Simmons's instrumental skills has been unusual, in that he regards cor anglais as his main instrument – as on alto sax, he's almost entirely self-taught. Tenor sax was his first instrument, which he worked to buy when he was 16 – his parents couldn't afford it. "Big Jay McNeely was my man – and Illinois Jacquet. I was listening to Bird all the time, but these were my guys," he says. So he was studying bebop, but playing R&B – though at this time, Simmons, like other artists, made less of a distinction between commercial African-American music and its more 'thinking' forms such as jazz. He feels he never got the recognition he deserved on tenor – hence on the sleeve to his tenor album *Burning Spirits* from the 1970s, he declared that he had created it to silence the doubters about his tenor playing, "these egotistical bastards", for all time.

As with Ornette Coleman and Jimmy Lyons, Simmons's links with bebop are clear at least in retrospect. Intriguingly, he also claims an influence from Lee Konitz. "I've been digging Lee since that recording on Prestige in the 50s called "Ezz-thetic", with Miles," he says. "He's still a great player. I dug him for being open in the music. Charlie Parker was my main man, but Lee Konitz was the next. Paul Desmond [Dave Brubeck's alto player] too. We grew up in the same place, but he was in the exclusive white area of Oakland and I was in the ghetto."

If, on *The Cry*, Simmons isn't yet at the height of his powers, the album is an important and intriguing statement. Producer Lester Koenig describes 'the cry' as the vocalised quality of free jazz derived from the African-American field holler and folk song. The implied contrast is with the sophistication of bebop and cool jazz, and Simmons is quoted as saying that he learned from Ornette Coleman to rely on melody alone, not chord changes, for direction.

"I'm one of the founding fathers of free jazz, along with Ornette Coleman. But I wasn't playing no noise. It had validity. It had composition"

Simmons's long feature on "Bojangles", named after dancer Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, marks the emergence of a major new talent. He might well be confused with Ornette on a blindfold test, and on reflection it comes across like the work of a disciple, of which Coleman hasn't had many, certainly not like Charlie Parker did. *The Cry*, like Ornette's own recordings on the same label, marks the birth but not the full affirmation of an individual aesthetic. Simmons doesn't have the benefit of a band that's had the opportunity to gel like Ornette's quartet, and drummer Gene Stone is no Billy Higgins or Ed Blackwell. There's a definite Ornette-ish feel to themes such as "Red's Mood", "A.Y.", and "Juanita" with its Spanish tinge. In the years after, he forged that influence into a totally personal style, by drawing also on modal and late period Coltrane.

The magnificent *Manhattan Egos* (1969) is more fully realised than the ESP discs – Simmons's sound is now richer and more urgently keening, the conception more confident. The Coltrane and New Thing influence is more prominent, for instance on "Coltrane In Paradise", which also features the fiery trumpet of Simmons's wife Barbara Donald. Though the sound isn't as faithful as Contemporary's – not many Simmons recordings before the 90s are – the group is on a new level of drive and cohesion, with blistering support from Juma Sutan on bass and Paul Smith on drums. It may be that Simmons's achievement, from here on in, has been to provide the most challenging synthesis of Coleman and Coltrane in the jazz canon.

This assessment is backed up by Bay Area bassist Chuck Metcalf, who worked with Simmons in 1979–80. Metcalf, a highly reflective musician with credits from Benny Goodman to the players out of the 60s avant garde, recalls him playing a beautiful version of the bebop test piece "All The Things You Are", outlining the changes in a way that Ornette Coleman would not, or could not. Metcalf argues that Coleman's music sprung Simmons from being a pure bebopper – for instance, while his compositions have chord changes, these are dispensed with in solos – and that he took his expressive stance from him and later, from final period Coltrane. And there's no doubt of the impact on him of Coltrane's early death in 1967. "When John died, I died. Jimmy Garrison used to come over to my studio that time. He explained that The Chief – that's what he always called him – had been ill a long time with a liver problem. I was devastated."

Simmons was the first to produce a genuine jazz sound on the unlikely cor anglais, first captured on record on *The Cry* in 1963. Garvin Bushell had appeared on the instrument on Coltrane's "India" on *Live At The Village Vanguard* from 1961, but his sound was more conventional. Simmons was inspired to play cor anglais, the alto oboe or English horn, a double reed instrument only played in orchestras, by the soundtracks of Cecil B De Mille's *Ali Baba* films. "I fell in love with that Eastern sound," he enthuses, "and I'll love it till I pass away." He wanted to play it in the school orchestra, which performed 'overtures' like "The Battle Hymn Of The Republic" and "Old Man River" – "nothing heavy classical". But they couldn't loan him the instrument and his parents couldn't afford one, so he was moved to saxophone – "I was broken-hearted," he recalls.

Orchestral players normally double on oboe and cor anglais, but Simmons didn't care for oboe – it was the haunting sound of cor anglais that he loved. He bought his own instrument, which was relatively cheap at the time. He admires the classical sound of the cor anglais, as well as New Orleans master Sidney Bechet, but he was the first to extract a substantial jazz sound out of it. "I was blown away, it was such a big sound. People found it so strange because it's a classical instrument," he explains. But the sounds of cor anglais and soprano sax can be similar. Coltrane started playing soprano about 1961. "He was the greatest soprano player after Bechet that I heard, and he sounded like a cor anglais at times, it was Eastern... He had to struggle to get the sound that he achieved. He used an Eastern concept on the beautiful scales he was playing. I *love* "My Favorite Things". His version is a masterpiece. That's heavy."

Simmons had not had any lessons at all – it had all been self-study and hints from other players. His single lesson with a swing era player came about through his friendship with Eric Dolphy, who was studying with Bushell. "I thought, 'Great as this cat is, he's taking lessons?' That really astounded me." Sonny asked to be taken along, even though Bushell's fee was $100 an hour – a lot for those days. But Bushell was a great teacher, and showed him things about technique, or "mechanics", as Simmons calls it, that he was able to work on for years. "Eric [Dolphy] was a master of the altissimo range on the alto, he got that from Garvin Bushell. It was clean and legit, it wasn't fake like a scream – he'd be in tune. It took me years to do that, and I learned it from Eric Dolphy and Garvin Bushell." Bushell's sound on cor anglais was too legitimate for him and his playing on the Coltrane date wasn't so strong. Simmons feels that classical teachers are often more knowledgeable on the mechanics of the instrument than jazz players. Though he dislikes the classical saxophone sound, he admires the work of Sigurd Rascher, whom he came across through Sonny Rollins's recommendation, and raves about a 1930s recording of Rascher with The London Symphony Orchestra.

Simmons's 90s comeback was almost as dramatic as his New York debut. As Sonny explains it, a French club owner heard him playing on the streets in San Francisco and hired him. He went to Paris in 1995 and started making good money. He had at that point also landed a major label deal, recording *Ancient Ritual* for Warner through Quincy Jones's Quest Records. On *Live In Paris* (Arhoolie), Simmons is working at high intensity, in the house band of Jacques Avenel and the late George Brown. Simmons sees Brown as a great drummer, Paris's 'in' counterpart to Sunny Murray, "the out drummer, the father of free music drumming". When I mention that Avenel was a longtime bassist with Steve Lacy, he expresses his admiration for the soprano player. "I knew him back in 63," he says. "Every week I was into something different then. We were all struggling to grow, to be great artists. Steve Lacy was among the pack."

His second album for Warners was the consummately Coltrane-ish *American Jungle*, also from 1995. The label asked him to re-sign, but offered less money. Perhaps unwisely, he turned them down. Around 2000 he formed The Cosmosamatics with saxophonist Michael Marcus, a group that has recorded prolifically on the Boxholder label. He's also worked with Anthony Braxton and recorded two solo saxophone albums, including the beautiful *Jewels* (1992), which showcases his memorable compositions. *Tales Of The Ancient East* evokes Eastern musical idioms, while an association with noise artist Jeff Shurdut, *The Future Is Ancient*, reiterates the connection of ancient and avant garde. He's also returned to France with a poetry project – *Fatherlands* with Bruno Grégoire – and a new group, The Triangular Force.

In his later career, Simmons has oscillated between free and less free playing. For instance, in the 1980s he recorded the very free *Global Jungle* and *Backwoods Suite*, a boppish album whose consistent groove is powered by drummer Billy Higgins. Always his craft based take on freedom is apparent. He's argued that after the golden era in the 60s, New York free jazz dissipated: "I'm one of the founding fathers, along with Ornette Coleman. [But] I wasn't playing no noise. It had validity, it had composition."

Simmons has described himself as "a brother who is still alive... who walked with the giants... played music and recorded with them". Many of his partners from the glory days have passed on – in the last year or so, drummers Bobby Braye from Oakland and Oliver Johnson in Paris, pianist John Hicks and tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield. Sunny Murray and Bobby Few are still thriving, and he'll be working with the Paris based pianist soon. Sonny is working in and around New York City, but nothing regular. A big highlight earlier this year in Oslo was playing with The kork Symphony/Crimetime Orchestra, his first time with a classical ensemble, brought about by Norwegian benefactor Jon Klette.

His UK tour with Tight Meat – David Keenan (sax), George Lyle (bass) and Alex Neilson (drums) – came about because he was impressed with their concept of free improvisation: "I think Tight Meat represents how important the avant garde front is in the world of jazz. I am honoured to play with this younger generation in this great black creative music." In light of his strictures about noise, it'll be interesting to see what he'll make of their punk-primitive post-noise mindset. But then Simmons's openness to new playing contexts has resulted in many of his most compelling recordings. Probably more of these are available now than ever before. "But there's so many more that could have been done, over the years," he remarks. Let's hope there are many more yet to come. □ *This month Sonny Simmons appears at* The Wire *25 and tours the UK with Tight Meat: see Out There. His most recent CD is* I'll See You When I Get There *(Jazzaway). Thanks to Janet Janke, Chuck Metcalf, David Udolf and Bruce Lee Gallanter of Downtown Music Gallery*







UR label artwork (here and following pages) by
Frankie Fultz, Abdul Haqq, Charles Gibson and Shadow Warrior

Since 1989, Detroit Techno collective Underground Resistance have been locked in a struggle against the global forces of Capital corroding the social fabric of their city. Breaking cover for a rare interview, founder 'Mad' Mike Banks discusses their methods of electronic warfare and UR's ever-proliferating cells — Drexciya, Punisher, Suburban Knight, DJ Rolando, Universe 2 Universe and more — through which they have taken the fight from Motor City USA to the stars. Words: Mark Fisher. Photography: Daniëlle van Ark

Agents of disorder



The Underground Resistance collective in The Hague, September 2007 (left to right): Ray 7, DJ Skurge, De'Sean Jones, William Pope (just seen), Atlantis, Esteban Adame, Stevie Bee, Juan Atkins, Mark Taylor (just seen), John Nance





"I believe that if you put your ego in front of the music, then the people trying to listen to the music can't hear it, they just listen to your ego"
— 'Mad' Mike Banks



Mark 'Vintage Future' Taylor and Stevie Bee of The X-Menn



"At one time Detroit was the only place in the world where cars were made in that kind of abundance, but now it's a more global game and they face really stiff competition from great auto makers from all over the world, just like we face competition from great electronic music producers all over the world. So what used to be your territory only, now is shared by many." 'Mad' Mike Banks is describing the current economic and cultural conditions in Detroit. I'm talking to him in The Hague, where Underground Resistance – the group, record label, collective and (cargo) cult whose operations he has co-ordinated for nearly two decades now – are appearing as part of the sprawling TodaysArt festival that has taken over the city.

Securing the interview was a gruelling trial of faith, involving missed emails, late night phone calls, postponements and a rearranged travel itinerary. My innate paranoia intensified by sleep deprivation, I had begun to imagine that I was being subjected to a programme of UR psychological warfare. Is this what anyone who gets to peek behind the curtain to see UR's sorcerer supreme must endure, I wondered? So it's not surprising that, with Mad Mike in front of me at last, I should feel a little like Willard at the end of *Apocalypse Now*. I've gone through the shadows and the mist, the rumours and the misinformation, to meet the man without a face.

As soon as Banks starts talking, there's no question that my faith has been rewarded. Mad Mike – engineer of collectivity, sonic and political theorist and techgnostic televisionary – is an eloquent and moving advocate of a position that the PR-driven cynicism of consumer culture would like to have completely erased long ago. He believes in the power of music to save and transform lives, something he's seen happen many times in the unforgiving environment of Detroit, his and UR's base of operations. At a time when politics and culture have lapsed into a cheery, anti-critical conservatism not seen since the 1950s, UR are more crucial than ever: invaluable both for their implacable persistence and their constant mutation. The label has an identity that is at least as strong as legendary independent imprints like Factory and Rough Trade. It has just released UR-077, and shows no signs of going gently into the good night.

On the face of it, The Hague – with its genteel mix of Old European grandeur and serene skyscrapers – might seem an odd place for an encounter with UR to happen, but Detroit Techno has always been about a strange transit between Europe and the USA. The first wave of Detroit Techno – initiated by three schoolfriends, Derrick May, Kevin Saunderson and Juan Atkins – built a futuristic rhythmic sound from synthpop components that had been designed, but quickly discarded and derided, in Europe. UR might have been the leaders of Detroit's second wave, but they have always been evangelical about the importance of the first wavers. "I made a little bullshit museum, I got Juan's sequencers, Kevin Saunderson's keyboards," Banks tells me, and Juan Atkins made The Hague trip with UR, fronting a blistering live incarnation of his group Model 500.

Banks's collaborators at the beginning were Robert Hood (aka The Vision, whose nom de plume, a reference to the existentially troubled android from *The Avengers*, is one of many borrowings from Marvel Comics in the UR universe) and Jeff Mills. As the pioneers of minimal Techno, UR pursued a ruthlessly subtractive sonic strategy. 1992's "Punisher" – a typical early track, and yet another Marvel reference – was perfectly named, since UR's records at this time were punitively reductive exercises in repetition. The song form was deleted, and the abstraction facilitated by the use of electronic machinery was embraced and accelerated.

Even as UR moved to 'minimalise' the sound palette of Techno, they maximalised its non-sonic fictional and conceptual elements. There can be no act which vindicates Kodwo Eshun's thesis about futuristic rhythmic music as a carrier of 'sonic fictions' more consummately than 90s Underground Resistance. Eshun's claim (in his 1998 book *More Brilliant Than The Sun*) was that, as the sound became more abstract and impersonal, the ostensibly peripheral material that surrounded and packaged it – the sleeves, the titles, the online communiques – bore all the conceptual weight. This opposition was nowhere more starkly apparent than on the early UR records: although the tracks themselves were largely devoid of any verbal content, they were presented as part of a densely consistent mythscape. The titles ("Install 'Ho Chi Minh' Chip" from the 1996 EP *Electronic Warfare* is one of the most delicious examples) referred to an ongoing science fictional war in which you played a part simply by listening to the records. By contrast both with the passivity imposed upon the listener by trad 'hot' media *and* the pallid 'interactivity' offered by New Media, UR have always been cool, in Marshall McLuhan's sense: their world inducts you and induces participation. The question 'Who is UR?' answers itself. *You* are UR, as soon as you are involved.

The relationship between politics and the sound was left occult, something for listeners to figure out for themselves. Kodwo Eshun set UR's silent stealth in opposition to the rabble-rousing hyper-visibility of Public Enemy, an act with which they have always been compared. While Chuck D bellowed that he *"would never be quiet"* (from "Rightstarter (Message To A Black Man)", 1987), Underground Resistance intimated that they "would never surface". What made UR fascinating politically was their refusal either to 'tell it like it is' or to issue any exhortations or instructions. Banks made an anti-egoistic ethic out of Techno's anonymity, refusing to be photographed or to play the PR game according to the media's personalising rules. "I learned not to describe anything and just leave it like water: clear, with no shape and no form," he explains. "I think that's what people really enjoy about UR, they get to paint their own picture. We might just make the canvas for them with the record, and in their mind they paint the picture and that's one of the reasons we sold for so long. We just went faceless. There was no reason for you to know what we look like, you just concentrate more on what the sound was.

"Unfortunately, people need a face all the time and for many years I don't give them a face, but now – Internet, cellphone – people take pictures of me, the shit's all over the Internet. I figure, well, hopefully the people will still have some honour, and honour my wish not to be seen in front of my music. I believe that if you put your ego in front of the music and place it in front of the speaker, then the people trying to listen to the music can't hear your music, they just listen to your ego."

In any case, attributing the music to a personalised being is philosophically, as well as ethically, wrong. "There's been times," Banks continues, "when I've made music like [1993's] "Hi-Tech Jazz". Man, when I made that track I can't remember nothing, it was a two week blur. The spirit was moving through me and when I got through, it was "Hi-Tech Jazz". Many times I play in church and as a keyboard player, or guitar player, or bass player, I'm decent at what I do, but there's times when people in church get into it, and the feeling comes, and the spirit comes, and you can play way beyond your ability. In fact, you know the bass pedal on the organ? I always have trouble with it. I have to look down and play the bass. It's difficult, but when the spirit comes, you don't have to look down, your foot be moving, so at the point you realise that I ain't really playing this organ. It's the same with a track. If the spirit come when you make a track, the question then becomes, 'Is it really you making the track?' So again, it's difficult to take credit for some of this stuff some of the time."

He nods enthusiastically when I say that it's the same with writing. "I've talked to a lot of artists, painters and they say that the point comes when they get it, and they just start doing it. Many times we say 'I did this, I did that', we all slip and say it, but the truth of the matter is, why should you put yourself in front of your music? As human beings, people got a lot of faults – a guy might like girls too young, or be into smoking, gambling, drinking – but your work, or your art, or whatever passes through you, your contribution, it lasts way longer than the human does. Beethoven and Bach, their music has outlived their physical being, so they would have been a fool to put their self in front of it, because as a man you're frail, but your work can stay in humanity forever, like the Egyptians. That shit is so deep, it's still there. People are still putting their hands on work that was done who knows how long ago. There's a number of reasons for the masks, but that was one of the bigger reasons."

Instead of pursuing the dull demystificatory agenda that has blighted so much political pop, UR propagated an elaborate system of (dis)simulation and mythologisation. Part of the reason that Marvel Comics appealed to Banks so much was that each individual issue contributed to the building of a universe, a consistent plane in which invented characters could commingle with entities from mythology and history. Banks appreciated very quickly the potency of what capitalists call 'branding' – semiotics as sorcery, the trans-substantiation of things by signs – and developed UR as a counter-brand that embraced, rather than decried, the power of the logo. Accordingly, UR have always been semiotically immaculate: their T-shirts, the best known of which features the skull-with-bullet-teeth Punisher logo pirated from Marvel, are perhaps better recognised than any of their records.

"[Sleeve artist] Abdul Haqq is a real big part of UR," Banks enthuses. "He's a conceptualist, he's a futurist, he's an artist, and I think a lot of the time he looked at us as a bunch of characters, so different, but maybe united by this weird, strange music. Silver Surfer was my guy, because he didn't talk a lot. He just did what he did, he was real smooth. Haqq really created the various characters. With artwork, he really added a great strength to what we were trying to do, a great spirit."

Banks also took design and conceptual tips from "old Progressive rock albums, Rush, Yes, Lenny White

"Somebody in Detroit public schools figured the kids needed to see some real shit, so they have these morgue tours, where the class get to see all the fresh kills. For the kids who have that blingy, bally approach, that shit wakes them up real quick" — 'Mad' Mike Banks

and The Astro Pirates, Jean-Luc Ponty. These were great records, because they took you on a musical journey. [Chick Corea's] Return To Forever always did that, the *Romantic Warrior*." When I suggest that UR – with their love for comics, Prog rock and synthpop – are a dream for white geeks, Banks responds that if they "listened to music that I guess in other places would be considered geeky music, or dorky, or whatever", that was down to "the guy who really laid the blueprint for Detroit Techno, Electrifying Mojo. Mojo was a Vietnam war veteran, he was a radio man in Vietnam, he did DJing for the troops, and that's where he learned all the different types of music from around the world, and when he got back from Vietnam, he brought that to Detroit, that perspective, so we got to hear Progressive rock up next to Falco, Euro synth pop. Of course, he introduced Kraftwerk, which for Detroit was huge, he introduced Prince, George Clinton, all these great synth artists that used synthesizers for basslines. I thought it was happening all over the country, but of course it wasn't, it was only happening in Detroit.

"I think personally, and I never got to say this in the interview that I did for [Jacqueline Caux's] movie about Mojo [*The Cycles Of The Mental Machine*, 2007], I think he ended gang warfare in Detroit with one band. A lot of guys will know what I'm talking about. That summer, the gang warfare was at a height and Mojo would get on the radio and ask for peace, pray for peace, and then drop The B52s, man. "Rock Lobster". Truthfully, you can't be too much of a tough guy while doing the rock lobster."

UR realised that there was little point in 'exposing the reality' of social deprivation and inequality – why bother, when that reality was already depressingly well known? Instead they used fictions to diagram the way in which social reality as it is experienced is a second-order effect of more abstract processes: a war between programmers and fugitives, between overground normality and underground gnosis, between a history given over to atrocity and exploitation and an empty future waiting to be populated.

UR started at the end of the 1980s, at the very moment when the End of History was being proclaimed. They immediately understood that, when the Cold War ended, political struggle would get even *colder* and cultivated an estranging, alienating distance. As the dyadic spectacle of the ideological war between the US and USSR power blocs gave way to the full-spectrum-dominance of a Capital that could now claim global reach, politics was itself *being disappeared*: real social antagonisms were gradually Photoshopped out of mainstream culture. In these conditions, the realm of effective action would not be on postmodernity's ubiquitous monitors but behind smokescreens, and the militants would be what Robert Hood called "spectral nomads", those adept at moving clandestinely between the mesh of Capital's worldwide web.

If the End of History meant nothing to UR, it was because they had never belonged to History in the first place. The cover of 1998's *Interstellar Fugitives* displays the legend "est. 1526". Tracing their origins back to the founding but de-grounding trauma of slavery, UR belong to the disjointed temporality in which the slave is marooned after the violent abduction from the homeland. The astonishing sleevenotes to *Interstellar Fugitives* insert slavery into a cosmic cyberpunk hyperfiction, webbing UR into a literal master narrative about an abstract "R1 virus" that passes through human populations, causing them to reject subjugation in favour of collective euphoria.

Despite its cosmic perspective and its success as a global counter-brand, UR always remained rooted in the concrete life-and-death world of Detroit. Many UR operatives would leave the city to become international DJs – the path followed by Jeff Mills and Robert Hood – but Banks always remained in Detroit. "The thing with UR is by me not DJing," says Banks, "I'm home all the time. So whereas the other guys are always on the road, I'm there. I hear all of the new crazy freaky stuff. Like I heard Drexciya and I thought it was some of the weirdest space shit I ever heard and, with the concepts, I was proud to be able to introduce the world to Drexciya. I was there for a number of artists coming through there – Gerald Mitchell, Robert Hood. I mean, Rob pretty much invented minimal music as far I'm concerned. Sometimes I hear about someone like Rolando [producer of UR's most successful track, "The Knights Of The Jaguar", 1999]. A friend of mine, who I'd originally asked to be our DJ, said, 'Hey man, I've got a wife and kid, I can't do it, but I know this kid that's DJing over in this little spot for $50 a night.' And we saw his ability and his skill, and me and some of the guys went to check him out, and Rolando was really tight, so that's a guy that we went out, heard about, went to see him and he was really impressive, and I'm just glad that I could introduce an artist of that calibre off the label."

Staying in Detroit allowed UR to operate as a paternalistic presence in a city whose public spaces had corroded after the collapse of the car industry and the arrival of neo-liberal Reaganomics. Banks sees UR as fulfilling something of the function that the car manufacturers in the city used to. Now that the former labour force has been "Replaced By Robots", as one of the tracks on this year's *Electronic Warfare 2.0* has it, the UR collective offer some kind of future for a Detroit youth that would otherwise be denied one. If Motown was the pop parallel to Fordist car production, UR are the Techno antidote to some of the ravages of post-Fordist capital. "On this trip, the sax player is 19, one of the keyboard players is 22, one of the dancers [the X-Menn] never flew on an airplane before," Banks explains. "So with us, man, what UR has been in the city, is a hope, and the young people, it's a great opportunity for them... I introduce a lot of young people to this stuff. Mostly I lose them, I lose them to Europe, to Japan, to DJing, booking agents I lose them to. But it's a good loss, because they get a career in music, maybe they get some pretty wife from Europe, but for us at UR we're still there. And I've got four new ones coming with me now, and their eyes are wide open and they're enjoying this trip immensely. It's way more than a performance for us, because all these guys go back, and they tell stories to kids. 'What's Norway like?' 'What's Holland like?' 'What's Japan like?' Here's this flow of information from guys who have really been there, and now the dope man ain't so powerful. I always challenge some of my friends that sell drugs. They're all like, 'Man, I'm making money, I'm doing this, I'm doing that.' I just hold up my passport, and I tell them, 'Yeah, you're doing this, and you're doing that, but motherfucker when they come after your ass, you can't even get out of the country, shut the fuck up.' And they see those stamps and they be like, 'Damn', it shuts them down. So to the kids, I'm much more powerful than some drug dealer, and to the kids these guys talk to, yeah, they might know the local drug dealer but my man right there, he just back from Norway, you ain't even been to Colombia where they make the cocaine. It diminishes their power and gives someone doing something positive more power."

Refusing absolutely the nihilistic postmodern aestheticism that relegates music to being merely a consumer preference, UR insisted that "mediocre audio-visual programming" was a weapon, perhaps the most important one, in the pacification of populations and the normalisation of the capitalist reality picture. The fact that postmodern relativists would treat Underground Resistance's rhetoric of "electronic warfare" as just another sexy metaphor allowed UR's operations to continue in full view of the programmers. But UR, firm formalists, have never been in any doubt that the tonal qualities of the sound have direct psychological and physical effects, uplifting dancing crowds from the dreary weight of worldliness.

UR's electronic warfare is aimed at deprogramming a population addicted and stupefied by late capitalism's stimulus blitz. But it's increasingly difficult to reach the disenfranchised youth in Detroit, made cynical by both the bleakness of the streets and the gleaming fantasies being hawked by the entertainment industry, which is why Banks is so positive about the 'morgue tours' organised by some Detroit schools. "The kids are coming up with this blingy, bally, party by the pool buck naked look on life," he observes. "Nothing wrong with that, but you need a little balance. So somebody in the Detroit public schools must have figured that the kids need to see some real shit, so they have these morgue tours, where the class go down and they get to see all the fresh kills. For the kids who have that blingy, bally approach, that shit wakes them up real quick. I coach high school baseball and it's one of the few things that I notice that they remember, it really affects them. It slows them down and makes them think a little bit. When they come back, they're like, 'Yeah, man, that was deep'... It's the first time you hear them say that word 'deep'. Usually it happened in the street, when you see somebody get fucked up. But they're so good at scooping the bodies up that they don't be there long, so the effect ain't the same.

"Some of the kids make it and some of them don't," he continues, "I lose some of them to the war.





Universe 2 Universe (left to right): De'Sean Jones, Jonathan Dixon, William Pope, Ray 7, Esteban Adame









Some of my baseball players, they're young, they're full of testosterone, they want to prove themselves, so some of them join the Marine Corps. I lose some of them to that, I lose some of them to the street, some of them start selling drugs. That drug life is so appealing to them, because of the money. Some of them carry on with baseball. It's like slavery. You lose two thirds of them on the trip. I'm thinking about not continuing coaching, because you lose so many of them."

Interstellar Fugitives – which features something like songs, albeit delivered in an 'Afrogermanic' Kraftwerkian catatone – marked a turn away from the minimal Techno that had been UR's trademark; they now called their sound "high-tech funk". But the beatless "UR On Mir" didn't sound very funky at all. With its simulated radio transmissions and ominous electronic textures, it imagines the Detroit collective aboard the Soviet space station circling the Earth. "Afrogermanic" – whose title alone could launch a thousand theses – repositioned the US as a mediator for an encounter between Europe and Africa, while "Mirage" was more explicit than ever before in articulating UR's gnostic gospel: *"Everything you see/Everything you hear/It might be a mirage."*
The 2006 sequel, *Interstellar Fugitives 2: Destruction Of Order*, diversifies the UR sound even further without diluting the brand. With their floaty synths and ethnographic samples, tracks by Deacon and Perception and 090 sound almost Ambient. Elsewhere on the LP, the sound is as harsh as ever. New codenames proliferate: Unknown Soldiers, Infiltrators, Aquanauts. The latter's aptly addictive "Crackzilla" updates and inflates the scenario of Phuture's Acid classic "Your Only Friend" – cocaine as a despotic stalker that will take over your life – by envisaging crack as a city-ravaging monster. Meanwhile, old hands continue to turn out killer tracks – longtime UR associate The Suburban Knight (street name: James Pennington) has by now perfected a lush, opiated and opulent sound that is part panther-slink paranoia, part dry ice atmospherics.

The lead track on *Electronic Warfare 2.0* is the brooding "Kill Your Radio Station", UR's latest assault on mediocre audio-programming, which coldly threatens to *"tie up the DJ/And drag him out back/Set him in the corner/Cover their head with a sack"* over acrid Acid ooze. As ever, music is a matter of life or death for UR: *"Kill my radio station/Before it kills me."*
The show in The Hague confirmed what *Interstellar Fugitives 2* and *Electronic Warfare 2.0* already amply established: that UR are very far from being a Techno heritage act, that their time is now. UR have always been fastidious about detail – imagine a corporation that is actually serious about quality control in the way that certain capitalist companies only pretend to be – and the night presents a seamless showcase of the UR continuum, featuring the precision-drilling DJing of Buzz Goree, and introducing Billeebob (aka John Williams), whose act, complete with live harmonica, is a fabulously eccentric, electro take on P-funk. But at the burning core of the live show is the awesome energy of the UR 'hi-tech jazz' outfit once called Galaxy 2 Galaxy, now re-named Universe 2 Universe. The name change was prompted by the introduction of new personnel into the group.
"Galaxy 2 Galaxy was one era of hi-tech jazz," Banks explains, "and now with the addition of a couple of new members of the band, De'sean Jones and John Dixon [joining existing members Banks, DJ Skurge (DJing, keyboards), Raphael Merriweathers (percussion, drums), William Pope (bass) and Esteban Adame (keyboards)], I decided that Galaxy was what it was and the Universe is what it is right now. And their 19 years old and 23 years old perspectives are different, young and bring really new energy, so I think the band has moved on."

Live music is not a new venture for Underground Resistance. Early on, Banks and Mills had played together. "The way Jeff DJed," Banks remembers, "he's so good as a DJ, he can actually make it an instrument. Jeff would say, 'Mike, run some shit on the sequencer and I'll blend in with it.' Or he would play drum beats and then I'd play 303 and basslines, and he controlled my sequencer with a 909. It was crazy what we were doing back in the early 90s. There was pressure: 'Will you come and play live, will you do this, will you do that,' and Jeff eventually got me up off my ass, and he said, 'Come on, man, let's do this', let's play in Germany at the Tresor club.

"The only bad part was that the Customs would tear up my equipment, the 303 they'd take it apart, the 909. They wouldn't take it apart heavy but they would always disassemble the shit, so I got kind of tired of that, man, because it was fucking up my studio gear. So, you know when Jeff went on to New York to DJ, I just quit playing live, I was like, 'Shit, I'm glad that's over, because now I can make some records', because they were tearing my gear up."

But the arrival of Cornelius 'Atlantis' Harris for his second stint as the label manager and logistics operative changed Banks's priorities again. Harris, who also acts as UR's onstage MC, is as amiable and gregarious as Banks is shadowy and cautious. "Cornelius came into our world," Banks says, " and he saw the need for strong management and booking, because he and I both agreed that a lot of times the booking agents from Europe were quite relentless in keeping these guys on booking, booking them a year in advance, and by us being there in Detroit, we noticed that the records weren't flowing any more. Cornelius cares about the primary reason anybody loves any of these guys anyway is their records. It wasn't their DJing, it was their records that people were first introduced to. And Cornelius felt that that perspective had been lost.

"Right now, he's on Juan [Atkins]'s ass about making a new album. He's like, 'Juan, you're not going to lay down, you're going to get in that studio.' You know, because a lot of people feel like he should roll with the old hits. But why should you give up at 40 years old? Kraftwerk is a great inspiration. I don't know how old they are. They don't even seem to have an age, they seem like some sweet-ass aliens that don't age, because they still tour, they still make records. And I think that's a great future for electronic music, because it isn't as physical as some of the other musics, it's a more cerebral thing. I think Kraftwerk were great pioneers in the beginning and now they act as great inspirations, because I've seen them play live many times but I've never heard anyone talk about their age, and in the early days I never heard anybody say anything about their race. They weren't Germans. They weren't white. In fact we thought they were robots. We had no idea they were human beings till we saw their show, when they played at Nitro's in Detroit way back in the day."

UR's politics have never been merely gestural or aspirational, because they have been engaged in the tough, practical business of building and maintaining collectivity. "Sometimes when you get writer's block, when you get flat, you can't pay the bills, you don't know where you're gonna go..." Banks says, tailing off. "Illegal money was way better than this music business, it just didn't have the travel. The only travel you got was going to jail. But sometimes it gets so bad, you can't do for the people you love, for my sister and my daughters, you want to do shit, but you don't have anything, and sometimes I go down to the wall in the basement, and I look at all names from different parts of the world where people have signed it, and that keeps me going. That, or John Williams, Billeebob, he comes by with his new track, and I look at these guys with different eyes. I might come from the basement, and they've got this big smile and this CD of their new shit, just like Drexciya did, just like Rob Hood did, just like Rolando, and I think I get energy from it.

"That's kind of how we make records. It isn't a plan, it's just whenever someone finds the time in their life to focus and they do it, and they bring it. They have a lot of respect for my ear. They say, 'Mike, what do you think, how's the EQ? Is it playable? What do you think, can a DJ get with this?' and I think, 'Yeah, we can drop with that on the label, it fits the qualifications, let's go.' For the brief period of time I get depressed with it, there's always somebody coming along to pick me up, whether it's somebody visiting from overseas, or one of my friends, locally, who says, 'Hey man, stay up, do your shit'. Or it could be guys on my baseball team, some of the kids. 'Hey, Coach Banks, when you going back out of town?' Because I get tired sometimes, but a lot of inspiration comes from the people, and the environment. I'm just blessed, man, the people come from all over the world. People will travel many, many miles to give you some love, and all the people who take the journey to our store, I really take my hat off to them, because they're quite adventurous, they beat back a lot of stereotypes, and they come right on into the centre of Detroit. They ring the doorbell any time of night, crazy motherfuckers, and next thing you know, we're down in the basement listening to Techno for three or four hours, man. That's the best shit. Can't beat that.

"Believe me," Banks continues, "all the money I've made playing live or selling records, it went to paying bills for what's in that building. When the people come to the building, they're standing in their own records they bought, and it's the weird thing, they know it. They're like, 'Damn, I helped build this place, didn't I?' and I'm like, 'Yeah, you did.' What can I tell them? Every dime we make goes into records and into that building and trying to keep it going. Believe me, man, it's a fucking struggle. We don't get any help. People try to get us grants, but we don't get them. So every month is a struggle, but some kind of way we squeak it out and keep going. We're still making cutting edge shit, man. It's wild shit, man. It's raw. I love that ghetto perspective on space and time and the future, because it's warped like a motherfucker, and as long as they're making it, I'll put it out." ☐ Electronic Warfare 2.0 *is out now on Underground Resistance.*
www.submerge.com





UR's onstage MC Atlantis aka Cornelius Harris



“Kraftwerk is a great inspiration. I don’t know how old they are. They seem like some sweet-ass aliens that don’t age. And I think that’s a great future for electronic music, because it isn’t as physical as some other musics, it’s a more cerebral thing”
— ‘Mad’ Mike Banks



Charts Playlists from the outer limits

Metric Converter 15

Sly And The Family Kilo
Kilometres Davis
Litre Drunk
Caspar Half Kilo
The Human Kilometre
Half Litre
Ike Metre
2.54cm Punch
Watt Productions
Degreemen
MC 274.32 Metre Jesus
Fifteen Metre Hose
Hedwig And The Angry Centimetre
25 Pence
The Kilowatts Prophets

Compiled by The Trawler

The Office Ambience

Steve Jansen
Slope (Samadhisound)
Six Organs Of Admittance
Shelter From The Ash (Drag City)
Tony Allen
Ole (Moritz von Oswald remix) (Honest Jons)
Alireza Mashayekhi/Ata Ebtekar/Sote
Persian Electronic Music Yesterday And Today 1966–2006 (Sub Rosa)
Gudrun Gut
In Pieces (Burger/Voigt/Pole/Dntel remixes) (Monika)
Various
Box Of Dub 2: Dubstep And Future Dub (Soul Jazz)
Dorothy Ashby
The Rubyaiyat Of Dorothy Ashby (Dusty Groove)
Silje Nes
Ames Room (Fat Cat)
A Bad Diana
The Lights Are Out But No One's Home (United Jnana)
Martyn Bates
Migraine Inducers/Antagonistic Music (Beta-Lactam Ring)
Uusitalo
Karhunainen (Huume)
Sun Ra
Disco 3000 (Art Yard)
Ole-Henrik Moe
Ciaccona 3 Persephone Perceptions (Rune Grammofon)
CCCC
Early Works (No Fun)
Grupo Oba-Ilù
Drums Of Cuba: Afro-Cuban Music From The Roots (Soul Jazz)

Compiled By *The Wire* Sound System

MARK MAHANEY

Kode9's Squiggly Synth Top 15

Flying Lotus
1983 (Plug Research)
The Associates
Message Oblique Speech (Situation Two)
Ryuichi Sakamoto
Riot In Lagos (Island)
Joker
Gully Brook Lane (Dubplate)
Terror Danjah & DOK
Code Morse (Aftershock)
Drexciya
Quantum Hydrodynamics (Tresor)
Ghost Face Killa
"Alex" from *More Fish* (Def Jam)
NWA
Alwayz Into Something (4th & Broadway)
Snoop Dogg
Gin & Juice (Interscope)
Quarta 330
Sunset Dub (Hyperdub)
Sa-Ra
Hangin' By A String (Ubiquity)
Sa-Ra featuring Talib Kweli
Feel The Bass (Babygrande)
Randy Barracuda
Rick James Is Dead (Flogsta Dancehall)
Skepta
Thuggish Ruggish (white label)
Warren G
Regulate (Def Jam)

Compiled by Kode9

Otsechka 15

Andrew Pekler
Cue (Kranky)
Secret Mommy
Plays (Ache)
Jimi Tenor & Kabu Kabu
Joystone (Puu)
Dntel
Dumb Luck (Sub Pop)
Felix Kubin
Axolotl Lullabies (Oral)
Montag
Going Places (Carpark)
FS Blumm
Meets Luca Fadda (Ahornfelder)
Avey Tare & Kria Brekkan
Pullhair Rubeye (Paw Tracks)
Various
5, 4, 3, 2, 1 (Otsechka)
Le Rok
Approx Twelve (Karaoke Kalk)
Porn Sword Tobacco
New Exclusive Olympic Heights (City Centre Offices)
Exploding Star Orchestra
We Are All From Somewhere Else (Thrill Jockey)
James Din A4
Karl Der Käfer (Esel)
Shellac
Excellent Italian Greyhound (Touch & Go)
Cornelius
Sensuous (Warner)

Compiled by Petar Palankov, Strumica, Macedonia
www.otsechka.com

Secret script[illegible]
notebooks (se[illegible]

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The devotional riffage of OM takes Metal beyond the material plane to a state of timeless grace, says Joseph Stannard



Spirits in the material world: OM's Matt Pike and Chris Hakius

OM
Pilgrimage
SOUTHERN LORD CD

When California Metal legends Sleep disbanded in the mid-90s after their weed-fuelled, 52 minute single-track album *Jerusalem* (later reissued in extended form as *Dopesmoker*), it was guitarist Matt Pike who bounced back first with what could perhaps be described as the paradigmatic Metal group, High On Fire. Their recent *Death Is This Communion* album offers a concise case for observing the conventions of the genre, its viscerally thrilling tumult evoking the landmark reverberations of Motörhead, early Celtic Frost and Slayer. Sleep bassist Al Cisneros and drummer Chris Hakius, on the other hand, claimed the sluggish Sabbath tempos and quasi-spiritual drug obsessions that reached a syncretic peak with *Jerusalem/ Dopesmoker* and channelled them into OM. Whereas High On Fire centred around the furious shitstorm of Matt Pike's gnarled guitarwork, OM featured merely bass, drums and vocals locked in mantra-like repetition with the occasional subtle variation.

Needless to say then, OM are no ordinary Metal group. Certainly no outfit in the genre's mainstream occupy their music quite as fully as they; in contrast to the fevered egos that abound at the heavier end of the music business, Al Cisneros has spoken of himself and Hakius not as creators of, but conduits for, The Riff. In a recent interview the bassist claimed that the repetitive figures the duo have made their trademark are continually present, yet exist on a plane beyond human perception. Cisneros and Hakius merely bring them out "into the open. The mind and the outer external instruments (nervous system, limbs, bass guitar, drums, etc) are just the bridges over which the thoughts and vibrations are carried." Although their rhythmic regularity and intelligible vocals mean OM are superficially more traditionally Metal than, say, Sunn O))), the intention in both cases is to radicalise the form, to abstract it beyond the associations overwhelmingly, and often short-sightedly, associated with the genre. Where Sunn O))) take the totemistic imagery and diabolic preoccupations of heavy rock and compact them into a black whole, OM cut loose its obsession with darkness and destruction, allowing the music to flow untethered into the arms of infinity.

Detractors will claim that *Pilgrimage* covers little ground the group haven't already explored, but OM albums are individual entries in an ongoing project. *Pilgrimage* takes up where second album *Conference Of The Birds* left off, just as that release was a more refined expression of the transcendent themes explored on their debut *Variations On A Theme*. The opening title track of *Pilgrimage* echoes "At Giza", the first track from *Conference*, both subdued raga-like pieces overlaid with beatific vocals from Cisneros.

When that song fades and "Unitive Knowledge Of The Godhead" bursts forth, it is clear that despite their preference for slothful tempos, Cisneros and Hakius have a firm grasp on dynamics: the track is propulsive, continually moving forward despite its lack of speed, its urgency located in the intensity of the performance.

Given their unorthodox, minimalist approach and clarity of purpose, it's tempting to consider which influences have been brought to bear on OM's music and methodology. Black Sabbath is a given, providing not only the blueprint for the entire Metal genre in terms of texture and attack but also presaging OM's identification of heaviness with spiritual insight. Early Sabbath tracks displayed not only a fascination with the occult, but also an inquisitive, instinctual attitude towards both drug use and the concept of Gnosis, occasionally intertwining the two, most significantly with "Sweet Leaf" from 1971's *Master Of Reality*. Recent split releases with Current 93 and Six Organs Of Admittance also suggest some identification with the worlds of psychedelia and folk.

Perhaps less obviously, *Pilgrimage* evokes the circular solipsism of Miles Davis circa *In A Silent Way*, *Jack Johnson* and "He Loved Him Madly" from *Get Up With It*. There are also fleeting moments when one wonders whether if the album were to be played at 78 rpm – chipmunk vocals notwithstanding – OM's music might resemble the more linear, straightforward passages of Mahavishnu Orchestra's *The Inner Mounting Flame* or even Billy Cobham's *Spectrum*. The suppleness of Hakius's insistent rhythms, the freeflowing virtuosity of Cisneros's basslines and the constant groove all hint at a familiarity with the devotional branch of early to mid-70s jazz rock. But OM take Mahavishnu guitarist John McLaughlin's mantra of "Love, Devotion, Surrender" even further, giving in to a state of grace, making music which is never self-indulgent, a dissolution of the individual egos involved in its creation. There are no solos, no grandstanding in the traditions of either fusion or rock, and a distinct lack of vocal histrionics. Instead, Cisneros's subdued murmur generally acts as an additional manifestation of The Riff in parallel to the hypnotic onward roll of the bass and drums.

OM are expansive, their monolithic repetitions intended to open up a plateau in the mind stretching far beyond physical confines, not simulating aggression or offering catharsis but facilitating contemplativeness. Unlike Black Metal, whose embrace of the void is stricken with horror at the fleshy impurity of material existence, OM allow themselves and the listener to impassively detach from perceived reality and plug into the timeless currents from which Cisneros insists their riffs are derived. In this manner they distinguish themselves as not only an evolutionary step, but a revolutionary force within the broad church of post-millennial Metal. □

Paolo Angeli
Tessuti: Paulo Angeli Plays Frith & Björk
RER CD

There are few musicians who could claim to be unique, but Paolo Angeli can surely be allowed that privilege, not least because he plays a unique instrument, the prepared Sardinian guitar. Fitted with a spike and played while seated, this acoustic guitar is bowed or plucked and strummed like a conventional guitar. It also has a set of six hammers situated above the bridge that hit the strings when operated by footpedals. It incorporates sympathetic strings and there are pickups all over its body – 14 inputs in all were used for these recordings.

All these radical modifications and the extended technique needed to play the instrument wouldn't amount to so much if the results weren't so impressive. Angeli's own composition, the dazzling, fluid "La Pianta Del Piede", starts proceedings with an exercise for hammer-on technique for both hands and feet. He sees his readings of music by Björk and Frith as "a confrontation and a re-reading of the compositions of two extraordinary musicians who know how to conjugate experimentation and cantabilatà".

As with so much of Angeli's music, these readings have a lyrical feel that seems to have their basis in a folk tradition. Which is why Frith's "Ahead In The Sand" works so well here, with its joyous, dance-like motifs given added sinuousness by Angeli's bowing, which has the resiny buzz of the viol. When he switches to sweetly articulated strumming, driven on by his footpedal operated string hammers, it's the sound of a one-man ensemble in full flight.

Angeli's translations of Björk's material are equally convincing, especially "Unravel" on which his gorgeous bowed melodies suddenly buckle up into fuzz lead outbursts. "Desired Constellation", another Björk piece, is equally successful. Quite how he makes the sound, simultaneously, of zither, fiddle and double bass is utterly bemusing. But that is surely what also gives it its energy and exuberance. Rarely has the "no overdubs" claim on the sleeve seemed so worth mentioning.

MIKE BARNES

Ai Aso
Chamomile Pool
PEDAL CD

Certain sections of the Tokyo psychedelic underground have long been fascinated with the wide-eyed, whispering fringe of female pop singers, in the kind of blank sun-strained mystery summoned in the cadences of, say, Claudine Longet or Joyce. Fundamental to this attraction is the idea of song as a spontaneous and 'natural' expression of an inner life reaching for the universal, supposedly all the purer for not being channelled through sophisticated technique. The additional patina of childlike naivety that many Japanese female vocalists bring to their delivery can become cloying, but the latest exemplar of the trend, Ai Aso, mostly manages to maintain a remarkable balance between artlessness and beguiling simplicity on this, her fourth album. On the follow-up to the remarkable *Lavender Edition*, her sweet and transparent voice once again takes centre stage on a set of her own songs set into astringently simple arrangements courtesy of her producer You Ishihara, of White Heaven and The Stars fame.

A select group of collaborators provides the subtlest of backing – a shiver of cymbal here, a chiming guitar arpeggio or the low swell of an organ there. There's a beautifully concentrated quality to the writing and playing. Particularly impressive is guitarist Michio Kurihara, presumably repaying the debt incurred by Aso's vocals on his recent solo album. He brings a rare tonal delicacy to his lines, a silvery shimmer that is perfectly attuned to the translucent texture of the voice, only exploding briefly and wonderfully into fizzing static fireworks on "The Future". The overall mood is melancholic and uncannily still, a sense of emotions slightly tranquillised, like being submerged in the herbal soporific of the album's title. Natural or not, there's certainly mystery and enchantment to be found in this pool.

ALAN CUMMINGS

Kevin Ayers
The Unfairground
LO-MAX CD

It's 15 years since Kevin Ayers last released a new album, and 40 years since he was first heard singing and playing bass with Soft Machine. Ayers's reputation as one of rock's finest avant balladeers rests squarely on his early work. The quirk and charm of *Joy Of A Toy* (1969) were genuine: unforced eccentricities sparking life and purpose from his distinctively suave, deep and smooth vocal delivery. Arguably his finest recording remains *Shooting At The Moon* (1970), where his group The Whole World, featuring saxophonist Lol Coxhill, experimental composer David Bedford on piano and Mike Oldfield on guitar, stretched him and his songs far beyond their comfort zone. From the mid-1970s, though, Ayers has repeatedly been waylaid by the combined pressure of songwriting conventionalities and his own whimsical leanings. The champagne-and-valium role of elegant waster has come easily to him.

On *The Unfairground* the voice remains velvety and consoling, if that's what you need; the arrangements are tidy and there's input from current Ayers admirers, including members of Teenage Fanclub, Architecture In Helsinki and The Ladybug Transistor, as well as old friends Hugh Hopper and Bridget St John (whose own back catalogue should be checked out at once by recent converts to Nick Drake, John Martyn and their ilk). The songs however seem geared to accommodate and consolidate the relaxed character of Ayers's voice rather than taking it into fresh contexts or eliciting fresh responses. Pleasant enough, but it's difficult to imagine anyone in 1970 saying of a new Ayers release, "Yeah, it's nice, but it doesn't challenge or stimulate like the latest Scott Walker." There's more than one way to drift.

JULIAN COWLEY

Olivier Benoit & La Pieuvre
Ellipse
HELIX CD

If I understand the sleevenotes correctly, this performance by the ensemble La Pieuvre is a formalised version of material that began life as a conduction. The 23 piece La Pieuvre have been in existence for more than a decade, taking conduction from their director Olivier Benoit. Together they've "developed a unique working relationship... an ever more refined gestural language allowing meticulously accurate intercommunication and the exploration of a richly varied soundworld".

Listening to this disc, I'm not convinced that funnelling their conductions into, as they are described, "pre-determined forms" is necessarily the way to live up to those fine words. It's not that there's anything wrong with the performance per se, but the group have obviously been through a lot of exploration to end up producing music that sounds so systems-dependent. The 68 minute performance divides into four clearly demarcated sections. The opening introduces a wall of electronic sound punctuated with percussion, and the composition develops by accruing textural intensity and harmonic depth as other instruments enter. Although there are some opulent timbres as sections of the ensemble fade in and out of focus, a rather faceless power-minimalism is a real and apparent danger. OK, it's not *quite* as bad as that, but when the music settles into a cosy rock groove, the governing aspirations of conduction seem all but forgotten.

PHILIP CLARK

Sir Richard Bishop
Polytheistic Fragments
DRAG CITY CD

Some of the hippest theory hits of recent times – Hakim Bey, Deleuze & Guattari – had distinctly and distinctively hippy-ish roots: things which seemed aggressively postmodern on first acquaintance turned out on closer analysis to be pretty freaky, in all senses. So it is with music, too. The recent turn to and retrieval of all things folk and/or Prog is only, perhaps, a belated recognition of what was often curled in our hearts all along.

I found this enacted in miniature with the latest solo guitar collection from ex-Sun City Girls mainstay Sir Richard Bishop. Initially, *Polytheistic Fragments* bugged the hell out of me – it reminded me just a wee bit too much of the early 70s, and that era's host of Absolutely Unnecessary Solo Albums. There's something approaching muso smugness here, on *Fragments*' (yes) fragmented sonic scrapbook of different offhand jottings and stylings: a slice of faux raga, a couple of Hot Club vamps, some space blues, even a jaunty fingerpicking track called (with bare faced cheek) "Tennessee Porch Swing". 11 tracks and every piece a different idiom: see, I can do this, see, I can do that. Sound quality wildly variable too, and no real linking pulse – barring the interest in things exotically and esoterically sacred indicated by the title (which less spiritually inclined listeners will just have to take on trust, presumably). It's both too focused on technique for technique's sake, and a bit dopily (or dope smokingly) facile. All felt a bit too easy. At times, yes, it's almost achingly pretty and undeniably technically spry – but... but... no sense of Bishop stretching himself in any wise whatsoever.

But then a week or so later I noticed something: out of the half dozen or more solo (mainly acoustic) guitar CDs I'd been sent recently, it wasn't the rigorous Jack Rose-type stylings I was returning to. No, they were all sitting unplayed in their cases – too severe, too dry, too homogenous. The only one I had been playing over and over again was... yep. *Polytheistic Fragments* may be the six-string equivalent of a chattering temple monkey, but something lurking under Bishop's luxuriously far-flung notes obviously speaks to the monkey in my own soul.

IAN PENMAN

Buck 65
Situation
WARNER BROTHERS CD

Ricardo Terfry aka Richard Terfry aka Stinkin Rich aka Buck 65's unmistakable voice – not to mention his, uh, unshakable self-belief, shall we say – has always been a love it or hate it thing... But with his last major release – 2005's intriguingly titled *Secret House Against The World* – he seemed to be within reach of actually manifesting the wild pile-up fusion he heard singing inside his head: Woody Guthrie meets Harry Partch on a bumpy hiphop highway (kinda). There was still too much (to these ears) that was too-dry hiphop by numbers, but what I did like I absolutely loved: on a handful of gorgeous and gorgeously askew tracks like "The Suffering Machine", "Le 65isme" and "Devil's Eyes" he finally sounded as good as the game he talked, and then some. Rough timbres and real mood swells – weird, lilting, weirdly affecting.

All the more disappointing, then, that this second major label release feels like a huge step backwards. He's back to where he was before – talking up a stylistic explosion in theory, and then giving us a rather flat rap in practice. The game talked is far more arresting than the work heard.

Situation appears to be some kind of loosely realised 'concept' album. (I got sent an 'Artist Statement' to peruse, which leaves you in little doubt young Mr Buck still thinks he's quite the polymathic bomb.) There's a kick-off track called "1957", which could also be an alternate title for the whole thing, which revolves around Terfry's notion that 1957 was a pivotal moment in post-war (pop) culture: the moment, in fact, when pop – in the shape of underground clique precursors like the Beats and the Situationists – first began to take shape and cross over and take on/over the world at large.

So yes, that is *Situation* as in Situationist; although I'd be hard-pressed to tell you how that actually features in or influences the work itself, which is 15 tracks of raspingly dry boilerplate hiphop, whose moods and references are pretty much (all) the American ones you'd expect.

There are some adroitly rhymed and apropos namechecks – from *"Buster Crabbe and Ed Gein"* to *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* and the CIA, Thelonious Monk and Ginsberg's *Howl* – but as to how much of an illumination it all adds up to, I'm not convinced. His picture of an America divided securely between quasi-fascist Squares and wonderful Hips strikes me as overly simplistic, to say the least. This may be to traduce his notions, which may well be deeper than that – but it just don't come across in the words or music. Just as his namedropping feels, finally, rather facile – likewise, in terms of sonics 'n' samples, he's taken a stylistic step back.

On *Secret House* it seemed like he'd found stylistic liberation by ditching his rap-schooled

Alireza Mashayekhi/Ata Ebtekar
Persian Electronic Music:
Yesterday And Today 1966–2006
SUB ROSA 2×CD

At the beginning of August this year, the Reuters news agency spread reports across the international media about an Iranian police raid on a "satanic" rave or rock concert near the Iranian capital Tehran, at which 230 people were arrested. A crowd of young people had descended on the town of Karaj, including Iranian born Westerners who had made the trek from Europe, and many were arrested on charges of drinking alcohol, using drugs and wearing 'inappropriate' dress. 20 video cameras were seized, and the local public prosecutor was convinced they were to be used to blackmail girls by filming them in provocative attire.

The Western media hunger for stories that depict Iran as a backward, quasi-medieval repressive society. The raid came in the midst of a widely reported crackdown by Iranian authorities on 'immoral behaviour', which led to gay men being executed, women compelled to wear more conservative clothing and males having their haircuts inspected by policemen for suitability.

These are the headlines, but the truth is a little more nuanced. Ata Ebtekar, by far the younger of the two Iranian composers represented on this split double CD, did his 'raving' 17 years ago while a student in San Francisco but has since moved towards more exploratory electronica. Using the name Sote, he made one record, the Gordian-knot Techno of *Electric Deaf*, for Warp in the prime of its Artificial Intelligence phase in the early 90s, then faded out of sight apart from the odd low-level compilation appearance. He's now living in Tehran, and his style has undergone vast changes. An album *Dastgaah* came out more recently on Dielectric, a label that promotes "Iranian Folk-Noisic". In a brief email exchange, I asked him whether he had heard about the 'satanic rave' in the Iranian press. He hadn't, and lamented the situation where Iran's media was forced to toe the Islamic government line. "We have a very unhealthy society," he writes. "People have two lives: one public life – very 'Islamic' – and one private life, behind closed doors."

Ebtekar's 13 tracks, collected on the second disc in Sub Rosa's set, are all apparently embedded with the deep structure of Persian folk and traditional music. Which means you won't hear glib, easy-won samples of ouds or ecstatic Sufi vocalists; the ecstasy comes, instead, from the music's disorienting atomic spirals and microbial motion. He reimagines the intricate disciplines of old musical skills as products of digital intelligence. The sound and texture of traditional Persian music are far behind, but its microtonal intervals and peculiar metrical tics are abstracted – with state of the art software – into titanium-sharp silicon études. This is the most compelling electronic music I've encountered for many months, and there are very few signposts as to its distinctive sound. The strange systems chatter of "Robot Radif", or the anguished waveforms of "Tahrir (Love-Birds Drowned In Sorrow)" lead the ears down a sonic maze, with a sense of menace and mystery and of unveiling the unheard, thus challenging received notions of structure, rhythm and narrative. It's difficult to imagine what kind of audience or even opportunities for exposure this deeply felt but extremely peculiar music would have in a country where all official releases have to be rubber-stamped 'morally fit for society' by the government (without an official registration number, all CDs are illegal). Ektebar claims he's been offered a show on national radio to introduce electronic music to an Iranian audience. Good night, and good luck.

Born in 1940, Alireza Mashayekhi came of age during the Shah's reign, and the music he was making in the mid-60s now seems the product of a vanished Iran before the country's name acquired its "Islamic Republic Of..." tagline. Having studied in his homeland as well as in Vienna and Utrecht, he is a composer of classical work based on Iranian music, as well as an enthusiastic adopter of electronic materials since the 1960s. Even back in 1966, on the tape based *Shur* (created at the Utrecht Studio of Sonology), the composer was talking about making a "dialogue between Iranian music and noise" and setting the parameters for a notion he calls "Meta-X". The booklet contains reams of Mashayekhi's erudite musical philosophies, which invoke the likes of Plato, Sartre, Adorno and Nietzsche, continually pointing towards the "unknown element" – a fuzzy concept that seeks the nature of sonic experience beyond harmony, counterpoint, serialism and all the building blocks by which a musical structure is built up and, by the same logic, disassembled again. Mashayekhi is an unjustly neglected electronic composer of this period: he never opts for generic concrète or computer sounds, and many of these pieces ring and resound in an unusual, parched red valley reverb. *Panoptikum 70*, subtitled *A Hymn To The Life And Death Of The Fishes Of The Mekong Delta*, is most time-bound in its allusions to the cicadas and helicopters of 1970 Vietnam. But *Mithra* (1982), *Development* (1970) and the stunning *East-West* (1973) – a fascinating counterpoint to Stockhausen's pan-cultural *Hymnen* – appear tinged with the dust-dry, jagged fastness and gritty permanence of ancient Mesopotamia.

Sub Rosa have done a great service with this intelligent, well-annotated collection. For these two composers and, one imagines, for other Iranian artists too, the way out of the present state of doublethink is to retreat into a Persia of the mind. These two, at least, invoke the ghost country not with rose tinted nostalgia but by cunningly trowelling ageless patterns into the stonework of their music. The first CD inducts a worthy new graduate to the Vintage Electronica Hall of Fame, while anyone exhausted by the conformist nihilism of US/UK digital noise should seek out this set for the second disc alone. □



A set of old and new experimental electronic music from Iran reveals a different impression of culture inside a state routinely demonised in the Western media. By Rob Young

Left: Alireza Mashayekhi. Below: Ata Ebtekar, aka Sote



flat recitation and attempting actual songs – and it worked. (I prefer his quasi-singing to his queasy rhyming.) *Secret House* was many-hued; *Situation* is the same dry/cutting tone, for 50 minutes. On *Situation* we're back to unrelieved recitation, where 'Old Skool' translates as 'unimaginative' and rather plodding. Unlike *Secret House,* there's no real stand out tracks. It feels like one long dry hump of a rhyme. (Maybe that's the 50s-referencing idea.) Whatever. One of Terfry's own heroes, Tom Waits, did this kinda thing whole worlds better – and in situ, as it were – in his *Blue Valentine/Foreign Affairs* mid-period pomp.

IAN PENMAN

Vashti Bunyan
Some Things Just Stick In Your Mind

FATCAT 2×CD

All but ignored at the time, Vashti Bunyan's 1969 album *Just Another Diamond Day* proved to be a slow-germinating seed for today's psych-folk movement. Yet before she created the songs that would see her lauded by the likes of Animal Collective and Devendra Banhart and eventually coaxed out of retirement in recent years, Bunyan was a failed pop star, a mid-60s protégée of Rolling Stones svengali Andrew Loog Oldham.

Listening to the Jagger/Richards-penned track which lends its title to this collection of singles, demos and home recordings, it's not hard to imagine why so few of these songs ever made it as far as the record shop. In the face of the overbearing horns and pillowy strings of orchestral production, Bunyan's fluty vocals quiver like a frightened rabbit. However, given space to breathe on more sparsely arranged tracks such as the 1966 single "Train Song", the wispy melodies and nonchalant picking style of *Diamond Day* emerge. Even the shy 18 year old of the 1964 demos featured on the second disc displays a quiet confidence, hanging songs on just her voice and the barest strum of guitar, weaving threads of resolute independence and chilly folk fatalism through the more typically teenage lovelorn musings.

ABI BLISS

CCCC
Early Works

NO FUN PRODUCTIONS 4×CD

One of the best and most intriguing groups to emerge from the 90s Japanese noise scene were CCCC (Cosmic Coincidence Control Centre) – guitarist Hiroshi Hasegawa (aka Astro), drummer Fumio Kosakai, bass player Ryuichi Nagakubo and vocalist Mayuko Hino, formerly a recognised actress in various underground softcore adult films. As their sound progressed, Hasegawa abandoned his guitar in favour of electronics and synthesizer, while Kosakai traded his kit for a drum machine, to which he added junkyard percussion and electronics. This impressive four CD chronicle of CCCC's early years (1990–97) reveals the development of their collective sound through live recordings and tracks for the Endorphine and Freak Animal labels.

The set begins with Hasegawa and Hino as a duo: a stripped back vocal and guitar improvisation that hints at the sonic onslaught to come. Recorded in 1990 at Tokyo's Sengawa Gospel, the piece builds from a wary feedback experiment into a towering metallic noise dragon. Several months later at the same venue, the group sound fully formed with the inclusion of the drum machine and bass of Kosakai and Nagakubo.

On the second and third discs, the change to a more rhythmically industrialised sound is even more apparent, with Hasegawa now fully converted to playing synthesizer and electronics, while Hino erotically howls behind thick black velvet curtains of noise. Unlike other noise units of the period, however, CCCC were able to step outside such careless pigeonholing to concentrate on making their multilayered sound a total, almost ritual experience. The two tracks on disc four show just how far CCCC evolved during their time together. In particular, Hasagawa & Hino's concluding 1997 studio recording "Magick In The Cave" is a culmination of everything they achieved, an intense blast of psychedelically frazzled freeform electronics that's merciless in its attack and beautiful to behold.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Aldo Clementi
Works With Guitar

MODE CD

If the reputation of Aldo Clementi is a niche thing, that's probably because he has never been the sort of composer to make grand statements or pontificate that his compositional schemata are about to change the world. His music is small, delicate and rather private. The *Serenata* (1988) that opens this survey of his music involving guitar, featuring guitarist Geoffrey Morris and The Elision Ensemble conducted by Carl Rosman, exemplifies his rarefied approach. The guitar begins with a snatch of borrowed material from 19th century guitar composer Napoleon Coste that painfully follows the harmonic protocols of its era. It's quickly swallowed up into dense ensemble writing assembled from Clementi's trademark web of overlapping canons. The overload of aural information plays with the paradox that, because there's so much going on, the ear boils everything down to a static surface.

Overlapping canons symbolise a recurring flow between past and present that is mirrored in Clementi's reshaping of familiar tonal material through his processes of de-familiarisation. In a cunning conceptual aside, the score is to be played three times, with each repetition getting increasingly slower and quieter. This obliges some instruments to drop out before the end, leaving terse interaction between guitar and clarinet.

The solo guitar *Fantasia Su Frammenti Di Michelangelo Galilei* (1978) plays further tricks with time by refracting fragments taken from a 15-century source through quasi-serial processes, like an eroded ancient parchment. The final work, *The Plaint* (1992), is an extraordinarily vivid and explicit amplification of a lament by 17th century composer Henry Purcell – English melancholia transformed into explicit modern angst.

PHILIP CLARK

Nels Cline/Andrea Parkins/ Tom Rainey
Downpour

VICTO CD

This line-up goes back at least half a decade, to *Ash & Tabula*, the third of Cline's Out Trio contexts. The guitarist, still enjoying a berth in Wilco, has steadily evolved a new language for the guitar trio, moving away from the power-trippery of the early *Chest*, with just bass and drums, to a series of troikas involving saxophone (Wally Shoup), harp (Zeena Parkins) and electronics. Andrea Parkins played sampler only on their first recorded encounter, but diversifies here with accordion, piano and keyboard.

The set, recorded at Victoriaville in May 2006, has a curious, almost unwound quality, starting with a massive opening track that lasts nearly 40 minutes, followed by one half that length, plus a tiny coda. This may well reflect the exigencies of live performance, but it sounds strange on disc. The set begins with loops and droned effect, but then quickly gains momentum, with Rainey's percussion again proving to be a driving force and often the main focus. Halfway through the opening "Downpour: Part 1" he executes a magnificent decelerating pulse that sounds like a man drowning in overtones, only to find a new, complex metre that moves through half a dozen asymmetrical and half-beat counts until the trio comes together again in a rockier place. Parkins's move to piano some way into the set creates new contexts, while Cline himself seems to be using some kind of octave-shift to explore lower sonorities. Whatever the technique, it's extremely effective and the set as a whole is immensely powerful. Play it reprogrammed with the short finale placed in the middle as a sonic bridge, and it's even better than the release sequence.

BRIAN MORTON

Bob Downes Open Music
Episodes At 4am

PARADIGM DISCS CD

Flautist, multi-instrumentalist, blues singer, improvisor, poet, composer for dance, theatre and mime – Bob Downes isn't your common or garden hyphenate. He plays two instruments more than Alfred '23' Harth and he's worked with some very heavy hitters indeed, reading verse with William Burroughs and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, playing with Keith Tippett, Mike Westbrook and in The London Jazz Composers Orchestra, whose leader Barry Guy is just one of a roster of top-flight bass players – Barre Phillips, Jeff Clyne, the late Harry Miller, Glen Moore, Andy Cleyndert – who have worked in Downes's Open Music Trio. All this without registering at all on most genealogies of contemporary jazz and Improv.

Trouble is that Downes, a fantastic catalyst and back-row player, has rarely produced entirely convincing work under his own name. The early albums, *Open Music, Deep Down Heavy* and *Electric City*, are still listenable but rigidly time-locked. There's some early stuff on this release: "Unidentified Flying Frequencies", "Sacrifice" and a couple of "Solo Duets" from the early 70s, the hypnotic "Your Call Requires A 10 Cent Deposit" (recorded on a series of New York payphones in 1978), as well as the more recent "Tribal Dance" and "The Wind Upon The Moor", which are lovely. The real substance of the album is a sequence of processed instrumental solos and overdubbed duets with self-explanatory titles: "Gong Electronic", "Dulcimer Flute", "Flute Circles/ Streams". When he plays flute, still really his first instrument, you might almost be listening to an étude by Haubenstock-Ramati or some other down-table modernist. For the rest, these tracks mostly seem like components for something larger. At first hearing, they drift out of the speakers like coloured smoke, curl around for a bit and depart, leaving behind a faint smell of joss. But with each successive exposure, Downes's mastery not just of sound-colour but of sound-form becomes evident. Even if "Marimba Electronic" sounds like the intro to yet another remake/remix of David Sylvian's "Ghosts", it has a perfect trajectory and leads beautifully into "Flute Circles".

As easily dismissed as he's been overlooked, Downes has left a strong fingerprint on much of the music of the last 35 years and deserves another moment more out in the spotlight.

BRIAN MORTON

Aaron Dugan & Jeff Arnal
Dog Day

C3R CD

Matisyahu's guitarist Aaron Dugan describes his background as coming out of John Coltrane and Sonic Youth. Here he's playing assertive noise guitar with a backbone of granite lyricism against Jeff Arnal's hard-as-nails drumming. The music is so compacted and diligently controlled that its 45 minute duration feels longer, as improvisations flat-pack themselves down to essentials. *Interstellar Space* is perhaps the obvious model, Dugan and Arnal learning from Coltrane and Rashied Ali's exquisite ear for tersely disciplined structuring and note choices.

Dugan's melodic language is broad enough to add naked prime melodic intervals to the expected walls of white noise. The first track begins with a flood of activity from Arnal's kit. Then a brief pause before Dugan's gnarly guitar makes its presence felt. But in a neat reversal of the standard ploy of piling more layers on top, Dugan refocuses his energy by stripping everything down to octave tremolos before rebuilding. Arnal's kit is brightly tuned and his punky gestures push belligerently against the grain.

Among the displays of high energy there are more sober moments. "Pisco" is assembled from pointillistic splashes that sound intriguingly non-intentioned; later spectra of guitar distortion and bowed cymbal fuse into a relaxed continuum. For the penultimate track, "Paz", Dugan gropes a melodic line noisily in the ribs. So much of *Dog Day* is perched between harmony and noise that this is a logical place for the album to end up.

PHILIP CLARK

Efterklang
Parades

LEAF CD

Copenhagen collective Efterklang have not released an album since their 2004 debut *Tripper*. Their five core members (supplemented in recordings and live shows by at least another six) also run the label Rumraket, home to Grizzly Bear, Kama Aina and Slaraffenland, among others.

Parades is aglow with grand gestures – broad, swelling string sections that form sweeping arcs to soundtrack an onscreen moment of revelation. It gushes with hopeful expectation that is both soporific and engaging. However, the naivety with which it is



saturated verges on sounding contrived, saved only by the simplicity and genuine feeling in its delivery. Collectively Efterklang have no dominating characters; they meld into an anonymous homogenous being, a vehicle for unified sound where no single voice is raised above the rest. The brass sections and chorus add childlike pomp to tracks like "Mirador" and the gentle electronics add a slight shadow and grace to tracks like "Illuminant".

Their sound has developed through regression since their self-released debut EP, 2003's *Springer* (reissued by Leaf in 2005). *Parades* drops the hangover of sombre grown-up home listening and draws its plainer arrangements instead from the wonders of childhood. It is built from simple pleasures, from the indulgent climax of strings and the charm of soft Scandinavian vocals. *Parades* succeeds in avoiding the most perilous pitfall of simulated whimsy and fey affected vocals to achieve something gloriously endearing.

JENNIFER ALLAN

Peter Evans
Peter Evans Quartet

FIREHOUSE CD

Trumpeter Peter Evans is an urgent new talent who promises to upend the world of jazz and Improv. Moving to New York in 2003, after graduating from Oberlin Conservatory, his stunning solo work was showcased at this year's Music Lover's Field Companion at Sage Gateshead, where he pushed the technical barriers of the instrument in extraordinary directions. Evans also works in contemporary composition, and performs on piccolo trumpet in Baroque settings, but the two recent quartet albums that feature him, his own *Peter Evans Quartet*, and Moppa Elliott's *Shamokin!*, show his radical avant gardism in a jazz context.

The former release is Evans's first as leader, and introduces his group with guitarist Brandon Seabrook, bassist Tom Blancarte and drummer Kevin Shea. Evans describes the group as showing "a combination of influences… the great recorded jazz of the 50s and 60s, abrasive noise music, wild and kinetic free improvisation". The leader has a beautifully warm, burnished tone, whose plangency recalls that great lost trumpeter of the 60s, Booker Little, and several of the tracks here show Evans deconstructing the Blue Note sounds of that decade. It's a totally original approach that combines lyricism with free rhythmic turbulence – the exact converse of the way freebop held on to its audience by playing free on a groove.

Evans's technical brilliance was never in doubt; what's astonishing here is his musical intelligence and conceptual nous. He also has a neat line in titles. The 15 minute "Frank Sinatra" begins like a subverted Blue Note ballad, while "Tag", with its characteristic long, boppish theme, moves into darker territory with a bass/trumpet duet and shimmering guitar lines. If you had a lingering suspicion jazz might be dead, this furious and compelling release will calm your fears.

ANDY HAMILTON

Faust/NWW
Disconnected

ART-ERRORIST CD

Anyone expecting a dada mash-up on this collaboration between Faust – here Zappi Diermaier, Jean-Hervé Péron and Amaury Cambuzat – and Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton and Colin Potter may be surprised at just how much it recalls the sound of Faust's 70s heyday. With none of the purposefully jarring juxtapositions of their latterday excursions into remixology, the four lengthy tracks which make up *Disconnected* reflect a mutually sympathetic dovetailing of styles, but with something undeniably *Faustian* coming through. In fact the opener "Lass Milch" is like a condensed showcase of the group's vintage era. It flits from an acoustic pastoral melody crossbred with drone and reverb to fluttering, metallic noise, speaker-shuddering rhythmic throb and relentless tom-tom beats. With its collaged edits switching between grinding momentum and the static space surrounding various spoken voice recordings, it nudges reverence, but remains compelling.

The title track is, by contrast, a semi-abstract melange of drone, treated voices and distant, fractured melody. It spreads inexorably outwards, with repeated themes so subtly delivered as to be bordering on the subliminal. "Tu M'entends" introduces an insistent percussion pattern to shimmering dronescapes with more jump-cuts between mumbling voices, noise ruptures and the relentless, tribal momentum of the percussion. Finally, "It Will Take Time" planes out into tonal drone and repetition with a simmering intensity that belies its relatively smooth progression. While *Disconnected* is not wholly rivetting, its consistency in evoking the best of Faust's past, then placing it in a new context, makes it a solid, satisfying piece of work.

TOM RIDGE

Fred Frith & Chris Brown
Cutter Heads

INTAKT CD

This excellent album was recorded in January 2002 and August 2004, in Mills College Concert Hall, Oakland, by two well-known teachers at the college – Fred Frith on electric and acoustic guitars, and Chris Brown on piano and electronics. Brown creates music for acoustic instruments with interactive electronics, computer networks and for improvising ensembles. He also invents his own electronic instruments. Frith, of course, is a protean figure who continues to range widely across the spectrum of composition and improvisation, within both acoustic and electric contexts.

Piano and guitar hasn't been a common format for improvisors, for reasons of duplicating range as well as sonority, but this pair explore leftfield techniques that make these traditional concerns inapplicable. The album opens with "Telltale Streamers Of Dust", like the aftermath of an explosion out of which emerges low piano sounds and juddering guitar chords. "Nothing But Make Me", with acoustic guitar and piano, is closest to scrabbling, scratching hardcore free Improv, but even here little electronic explosions divert and subvert acoustic responses – especially the alarming passage that sounds like a phone ringing loudly. "Swing Like Riddle" offers a kaleidoscope of electronic effects, but like other tracks also exploits detuning to create sounds with a 'dead' tonality. "Sings The Foundation", with its huge sonic panorama, sets up a maelstrom flux that evolves into something close to a free groove. Its traditional arch structure has a dying fall that's quite magical – one of many delights on a consistently inventive album.

ANDY HAMILTON

Brion Gysin
Live In London 1982

SUB ROSA CD

Genesis P-Orridge, one of the organisers of The Final Academy – a series of events staged in London in 1982 – described the project as "a reminder of work already done, notice of work to be done and a challenge to the stagnant complacency of dreamless minds". At the core of the Academy were novelist William S Burroughs and his associates John Giorno and Brion Gysin. Gysin, who died in 1986, is known mostly for his permutation poems, which lent themselves neatly to collaborative performance with saxophonist Steve Lacy, his co-invention with Ian Sommerville of the Dreamachine, a flickering trance-inducer, and 'cut-ups', his literary resuscitation with Burroughs of modernist collage technique.

On stage Burroughs invariably projected a menacing intelligence, his inimitable voice delivering lurid satire with a scowl often intensified to a snarl. Giorno reciting his poems could be riveting: wired to snapping point, nervy and obsessive. As this recording of a 1982 appearance confirms, Gysin wasn't a performer of the same calibre. His middle class Buckinghamshire origin is betrayed in lingering vocal gentility that distinctly lacks an outlaw edge. But the disparate voices of the Beats found common ground in investigation of potentially subversive fields of intellectual inquiry, and Gysin's questing spirit is plentifully evident in this selection of his own texts and commentaries. The physical energy level of the set is raised at times by an accompanying quartet that includes Rip Rig & Panic drummer Steve Noble and Slits bassist Tessa Pollitt. *"New tunes for old words,"* Gysin announces. Musically it's scrappy and far less arresting than his work with Lacy but it's another connection made. Overall, this document meets an established interest rather than fresh curiosity or the needs of the dreamless.

JULIAN COWLEY

Heavy Winged
Blacc Lust

THREE LOBED RECORDINGS CD

The members of Heavy Winged have contrived to live in cities either side of North America. This makes recording opportunities rare. Rejoice, therefore, that Three Lobed are giving recordings previous available in fashionable CD-R micro-editions a wider release (albeit only in an edition of 500), as new material is all too slow coming.

The three tracks here total nearly an hour. All are improvised and recorded live straight to four-track. "Crimson" is a close-miked maelstrom of dense grey noise, a copy of a copy, each version flooding over the original, ever degrading and defiling the source sound. It stands like a vast blank wall of a monolithic windowless tower block, seemingly featureless from a distance but so rough close up that it tears skin from flesh and flesh from bone.

While this brutally primitive audio has its own merits, there is greater colour and interest in the other two less remorseless tracks. "In

Bloum" starts out on a ride cymbal beat crowned by squalls of feedback before the whole piece sinks into its own dark-winged shadow – the darkness only growing denser before emerging into the light of arcing feedback soaring over a dolorous double-tom lurch. "Blacc Stork" tries to cave your skull in from the off, with a stop-start riff like a giant's fist in spasm. Feedback guitar screams from the depths of an echo chamber but finds no release. It ends in a savage drawn-out flailing as pitiful as the broken wings of a raven ravaged by gale winds and storm rains.
NICK SOUTHGATE

Kim Hiorthøy
My Last Day
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND CD

As anyone who has seen his sleeve designs for the Smalltown Supersound or Rune Grammofon labels might know, Kim Hiorthøy is a graphic designer and artist. He's also a photographer, writer, film maker and resident of two of Europe's most desirable cities, Oslo and Berlin. Faced with a man of so many talents, it comes as some relief to discover that at least his music isn't without its flaws.

As with Hiorthøy's previous albums, *Hei* and *Melke*, *My Last Day* occupies similar sample based territory to Four Tet, say, with an emphasis on tentative minor-key melodies and retired Acid squiggles set against a sense of percussive playfulness: martial snares, snatches of vibes-like sounds and vocal fragments used as punctuation before the breakbeats kick in again. It's electronica with a cheerfully short attention span, with each set of four or eight bars bringing a new sound or texture to enjoy. However, this restlessness itself becomes a repetitive habit. Opener "I thought we could eat friends" has enough momentum in its high-voltage crackling electro bass to pull it off, but by the time the piano waltz "Skuggan" is reached, you could set your watch by the way in each new phrase adds to the tin-can rattle of instrumentation accumulating over the main theme.

Brace yourself for a lack of surprises, however, and *My Last Day* is hard to dislike. For all his pedestrian rhythms, Hiorthøy proves adept at keeping interest by running melodies across disparate registers and timbres, lending the album a pleasingly squashy covering to distract from its too-solid framework.
ABI BLISS

King Crimson
The Great Deceiver: Live 1973–74
DGM 4×CD

Despite Chris Cutler's insistence to the contrary, the 1972–74 line-up of King Crimson was one of the strongest improvising rock groups ever assembled. In bassist John Wetton and drummer Bill Bruford they had the most powerful of rhythm sections, fusing the trance-funk slipperiness of Can's Jaki Liebezeit and Holger Czukay, the brutality of Led Zeppelin's John Bonham and John Paul Jones, and the casual intricacy of Henry Cow's John Greaves (and later, Georgie Born) and the aforementioned Cutler. Violinist David Cross brought in elements of ethnic folk and austere conservatoire modernism; guitarist Robert Fripp, fresh from his recording adventures with Brian Eno, had just taken flight as an instrumentalist and composer, dragging his cohorts by the scruff of the neck into virgin territory. Finally, there was the crucial input of percussionist Jamie Muir, who spent only a few months with the group, but whose background in the London Improv scene had a radical effect on Crimson's work. He's all over this collection, in spirit if not in body.

That Crimson managed to make such a radical noise in front of mainstream audiences is remarkable; although never quite in the Prog rock first division with Yes and ELP, they were certainly close. Had 1973's *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* been their first album, rather than the 1969 line-up's massively popular pomp-rock abomination *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, they would probably have been scraping around for the same gigs as Cutler and co.

Until the original release of this mammoth box set in the early 90s – of which this present edition is a straight reissue – the improvising side of the group was under-represented on record. Happily, *The Great Deceiver* is chock full of the group in full spontaneous-composition splendour, from the strongly Muir-informed abstract pieces from the 1973 concerts to the bludgeoning atonal boogie workouts they were purveying a year later. While their true contemporaries like the electric-era Miles Davis groups and the most adventurous German groups continue to garner the plaudits, Crimson remain a much maligned and misunderstood beast. Forget Prog; file this next to *Dark Magus* or *Tago Mago* as some of the rawest and most exciting music ever committed to disc.
KEITH MOLINÉ

Pamelia Kurstin
Thinking Out Loud
TZADIK CD

Singer Ute Wassermann recently told me that she plans to study the theremin as a complement to her extended vocal techniques. The vintage electronic instrument's affinity with the human voice is made vividly clear by the glide and gentle tremolo of its otherworldly warbling on the opening track on Pamelia Kurstin's excellent *Thinking Out Loud*. Of course every human voice is distinctive, whereas the theremin – an instrument untouched even by the player's hands – appears to lend itself to choreographed virtuosity rather than projection of personality. Kurstin's use of it, however, far transcends the typical spooky wail of countless sci-fi soundtracks. She manages brilliantly to avoid sounding either generic or anonymous.

Theremin players need an especially good ear; in Kurstin's case this extends to highly distinctive musicality. She has adapted her instrument with microsynth and looping pedals that allow her to build chords and create counterpoint. She also performs a duet with guitar and a piano solo in the course of these seven tracks, recorded – mostly live – at various European venues and in New York towards the end of 2006. The theremin's physical structure and the modalities of looping help determine the music's form, its pace and regularities, but there's major input too from Kurstin's judgment and imagination, evident in inspired alignments and unexpected textures. Murky, fuzzed and sinister passages contrast with sequences of dreamy beauty. The final track ends with audience applause and then we hear Kurstin's speaking voice, sounding quirky and amused at her own performance. An apt conclusion – she's there throughout this singular music.
JULIAN COWLEY

L-R & RadioMentale
I Could Never Make That Music Again
SUB ROSA CD

L-R is Jean-Yves Leloup, RadioMentale are Leloup and Eric Pajot, and the pieces making up *I Could Never Make That Music Again* were based on sequences initially composed for a radio art show on Parisian station FRG. L-R's near 22 minute title track is the album's centrepiece. It's held together by an ethereal web comprising samples of electronic music from the 50s and 60s, including Paris's GRM and the Dutch Philips Research Laboratories, as well as Donna Summer's "I Feel Love" and Joe Meek's "I Hear A New World".

In and out drift comments from, among others, A Guy Called Gerald, Autechre, Mixmaster Morris, Steve Reich, Fennesz and DJ Shadow. So fragmented and out of context are these remarks that it's hard to glean much from them. Autechre are keen to stress the role of emotion in their music, Derrick May talks grandly and blandly about how "electronic music chose me". The Aphex Twin expounds on his somewhat ambitious efforts to manipulate his own dreams, and there are disconnected snippets of sagacity from Reich.

What's really interesting, however, isn't the educational quality of the vocal samples or their documentary value, but rather the interaction between them and the sonic backdrop against which they jar, float in and out of. They are part of the material of the piece, rather than a disconnected commentary. Its opening, incidentally, is very amusing – an audio letter from BBC Radiophonic Workshop sound engineer Fred Judd to a Dutch composer, painting a gloomy future for electronic music: *"There's no call for it."*

This is still more the case with RadioMentale's "Thousands Of Records", in which *The Wire* contributor David Toop muses on his recent preference for silence as an option to the many thousands of sound recordings to which he has been exposed in his lifetime, as the sound collage laps around him and spills over into his spoken words. There's also a strong link between Matthew Herbert's discussion of his sample sources and the incidental background noises made during the interview which are reworked in the manner of his work as Herbert. Finally, there is a "dialogue" between Andrea Parker and Pole, two musicians who have never met, in which they discuss their music practice as their own voices are "practised" upon.

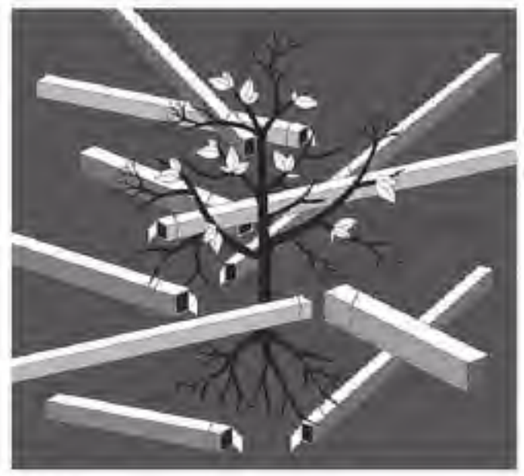
I Could Never Make That Music Again feels like a floating tour around the gigantic cerebellum in which all wisdom about the making of electronic music is contained, with theory and practice in a constant and entertaining series of minor collisons.
DAVID STUBBS

Urs Leimgruber
13 Pieces For Saxophone
LEO CD

Although his profile is surprisingly low, Urs Leimgruber has been one of the major

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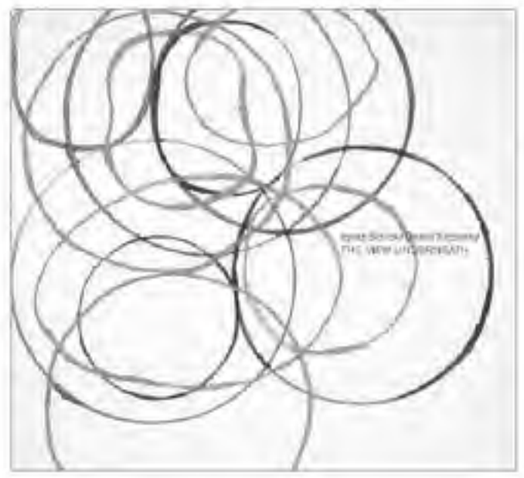
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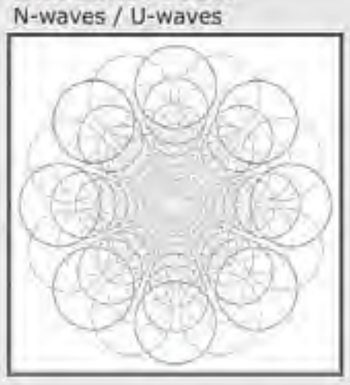
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saxophonists on the European free Improv scene for almost two decades. His *Statements Of An Antirider* (Hat Hut 1988) is a masterpiece of solo exploration and the several discs he has made with Fritz Hauser (sometimes with Adelhard Roidinger or Joëlle Léandre on double bass) are beautifully alert, poised and exquisitely tensioned. Leimgruber works extremely well in groups – ie he's a sensitive and creative collaborator – but it's on his solo recordings that he really comes into his own.

The knowledgeable listener to *13 Pieces For Saxophone* (alto, in this case) will immediately identify aspects of Evan Parker's solo music, perhaps, in particular his *Chicago Solo* (Okka Disk 1995), but the whistling harmonics of Leimgruber's "Four" and aspects of the fuzzy logic and woozy articulations of "Seven" (the 13 tracks here are numbered rather than titled) owe more to latterday Michel Doneda and Bhob Rainey than Parker, and that's partly down to an awareness that technique (which Leimgruber has in abundance) is not all that a solo statement should consist of. The muezzin wail of "Six", which eventually evolves into a series of constrained phrases emerging from a modular, repetitive system, bespeaks compositional rigour rather than an improvisor's pure flight of fancy. Leimgruber is in perfect command of his material, so there's very little on this CD that even the most nitpicking listener could consider technically, compositionally or musically irrelevant. Saxophonists should give it a listen, but, frankly, so should everyone else.

BRIAN MARLEY

Mawja
Studio One

AL MASLAKH RECORDINGS CD

Recorded in 2005 and released by the Lebanese label Al Maslakh, which translates as The Slaughterhouse, *Studio One* documents two compatible performances at Pancake Alley, New York and Candlestick Maker in Chicago by Michael Bullock (contrabass and feedback), Mazen Kerbaj (trumpet) and Vic Rawlings (cello and surface electronics). Theirs is a quiet and occasionally tentative improvised music, allowing drones to establish an atmosphere before the players muddy it, in the process finding new directions and the means to explore them.

None of the acoustic instruments sound as you would expect them to but that's par for the course nowadays. Kerbaj, in particular, can manufacture a wide range of abrasive and percussive sounds from the mutes and resonators he introduces to the bell of his trumpet, all of which he uses sparingly and with discretion.

The lengthy "S 1.4" is introduced, rather unnecessarily, as a quiet piece – nearly all of the six tracks are quiet pieces – and its ghostly resonances billow and distort perception like mist on moorland. The track grinds almost to a halt around the 12 minute mark, and there's a flailing moment, which is nonetheless interesting to hear, before the players manage to re-establish a rapport and carry the music forward. Warts and all, this is a fine example of improvised music in the new millennium, and a good indication that Improv still has something valuable to offer, something that no other music can provide.

BRIAN MARLEY

Joe McPhee
Soprano

ROARATORIO LP

Joe McPhee/Peter Brötzmann/ Kent Kessler/Michael Zerang
Guts

OKKA DISK CD

In 1976 multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee recorded an album of solo performances on tenor saxophone, but has resisted making a companion album on soprano until now, doubting that the world needed another solo soprano recording (evidently, he is a man of taste and compassion as well as considerable talent). *Soprano*, whose cover incorporates a silkscreen print on rice paper designed by Judith Lindbloom, documents a recital in St George's Church, Ontario during the 1998 Guelph Jazz Festival. The acoustics gave McPhee problems in terms of delay and reverberation times, but, inspired by Pauline Oliveros at the previous year's festival, he set out "to play with time and space".

Inevitably there are occasional bronchial contributions from the audience determined to test the echo themselves. Fortunately, the intensity, fluency and elegance of McPhee's improvisations overcome all distractions, whether in convoluted circular breathing passages or languorous legato melodies. While Oliveros had been accompanied by a spectacular thunderstorm, McPhee made do with his Miniaturised Electronic Support System (or MESS) on the mesmeric side two opener, "A Night On Rose Mountain".

Guts is a far cry from *Soprano*'s reflective, well-wrought improvisations. Here, his trumpet, alto and tenor are matched with Brötzmann's alto, tenor, clarinet and tarogato alongside the powerful bass and percussion of Kent Kessler and Michael Zerang. The CD's cryptic notes quote a letter from Malachi Ritscher, who recorded this session and thousands of others on Chicago's free jazz scene. The letter ends *"without fear I go now to God..."*, and during rush hour on that day Ritscher went to a motorway feed road, doused himself in petrol and immolated himself in protest at the war in Iraq. The event, not unsurprisingly, received little media coverage. Apart from the terrible personal tragedy, Ritscher was a considerable loss to Chicago's music community.

"Guts" itself is the shorter of the two tracks here recorded in August 2005, the other is "Rising Spirits". Both titles can support various layers of meaning, and somewhere in there is also Mongezi Feza's composition "You Don't Know Me 'Cause You Think You Know Me". As expected from the players, the album is principally a visceral, cathartic assault on the sensibilities, laced with passages that are less turbulent but no less searingly passionate. Of course, these powerful performances were not and could not have been in any way influenced by Ritscher's future death, but listening to them now, aware of what happened, I could not help but hear them differently.

BARRY WITHERDEN

McWatt
McWatt

SINGING KNIVES CD

McWatt, named after Sarah McWatt, who plays flute and accordion in this interesting duo, make acoustic instrumental music that's minimal without being minimalist, and their tunes comfortably occupy the often uneasy territory between chamber music and folk. McWatt is ably partnered by Seth Bennett (double bass and accordion), and as no breakdown of composers is given, I assume they work on the pieces together. The tracks, only one of which tops the four minute mark, are untitled, presumably to avoid referentiality. The album is, in fact, nicely ambiguous in almost every regard; without knowing that the musicians who made it are British, based in Liverpool and Leeds, I'd be hard pushed to guess even their country of origin.

That said, the first track sounds like the slightly mannered opening measures of one of Henry Threadgill's 1980s dirges, and tracks seven, eight and ten have something of Howard Skempton's songlike complexity-in-simplicity about them. The fact that Skempton has written extensively for accordion makes the comparison nigh unavoidable. But he probably wouldn't have made space in his tightly focused music for the pensive double bass solo that Bennett provides on the final track (and in track five), nor the track's seemingly extempore fade-out. McWatt and Bennett shuffle the instrumentation judiciously throughout the album to present the music to best advantage, and everything falls into place naturally, free of contrivance. *McWatt* is one of the most refreshing and pleasurable CDs I've heard this year, and I sincerely hope there's more to come from this duo.

BRIAN MARLEY

Ju Suk Reet Meate
Solo 78/79

DE STIJL CD

Also known as *Do Unseen Hands Keep You Dumb?*, Smegma member Ju Suk Reet Meate's late 70s solo album has been a difficult-to-find example of early noise music until this CD reissue. Although not purporting to be a Smegma record, Meate's eccentric mix of found sounds, plunderphonics and assembled instrumental improvisation bears all the hallmarks of his main group.

Old School rock and surf beats are energetically blended with wild loopings of spoken word surrealism, where strange disembodied speech fragments transform into tangled backing tracks. During one vibrant section, these are overlaid with elephantine jazz trumpet solos resounding with a ghostly Village Vanguard echo, a fond remembrance of jazz past that Meate has massaged back to life. As an example of early sampling techniques (using the most basic materials and equipment), *Solo 78/79* is a key text that today's rogue pack of noise makers should take heed of if they truly want to learn the secrets of their craft.

The sound here is devoid of fashionable hiss and distorted digital sludge; instead Meate has carefully given his noise a sense of recognisable aural structure that punches pictures and sensations in your head instead of leaving you to endure yet another emotionless bout of white noise ear-bashing. The tenderness and humanity at work here nudge closer to the folk concrète constructions of Vanguard-era John Fahey than much of today's rut rooted noise scene. Listen and learn.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Toshimaru Nakamura & Lucio Capece
IJ
FORMED CD

Alles 3
I Know How You Frown
KWANYIN CD

Latterday electroacoustic improvisation might studiously avoid the lightning-fast interplay typified by the first generation of free improvisors nearly 40 years ago, but there's always been something dangerous about Toshimaru Nakamura's no-input mixing board, a sense that the tiniest tweak on a fader could send the music off down a completely different path at a moment's notice. Despite the predominantly low volume level and slow pace, the two extended tracks on *IJ*, recorded in Amsterdam's STEIM last year with Berlin based Argentinian Lucio Capece, pack plenty of surprises, not all of them pleasant even after many concentrated listenings.

Capece's soprano sax and bass clarinet, often prepared with plastic, paper and ping-pong balls, sound more at home in the company of electronics than they did on his recent all acoustic outings with Robin Hayward and Axel Dörner, and complement Nakamura's astringent textures well to produce a thought-provoking, occasionally frustrating, but ultimately rewarding album.

The much livelier *I Know How You Frown* finds Nakamura in the company of another Berliner, Nicholas Bussmann, whose spiky electronics nudge him gently back towards the more pulse based music that characterised his solo work at the beginning of the decade. Hardcore Improv heads who like their music dilatory, deadpan and drizzly might balk at the latent technoid funk of "Three" or the dreamy Debussy-like loops of "Oops I Did It Again", but they'd do well to remember that Bussmann moves in a wider orbit, his other activities including curating performances of John Zorn's *Cobra* and organising the Grand Prix d'Amour, in which local musicians are invited to submit "straight, queer, nerdish love songs". He might want to consider awarding himself the prize for this.

DAN WARBURTON

Naoshima/Takeda/Kawasaki/ Takeuchi/Koike/Kawaguchi/ Totsuka
Septet
MEENNA CD

I was obviously mistaken in thinking the masterly inactivity of Taku Sugimoto's *Live In Australia* marked a point of no return for improvised music – it appears to have started a trend. In 2006, Takefumi Naoshima (mixing board), Hirozumi Takeda, Utah Kawasaki (guitars), Mitsuteru Takeuchi (flute), Toshihiro Koike (trombone), Takahiro Kawaguchi (remodelled counters) and Yasuo Totsuka (compressor) went to Tokyo's Tanker studio and recorded 67 minutes of next-to-nothingness before passing the soundfiles over to Toshimaru Nakamura, whose mastering cranks up the levels so high that the groan of passing traffic outside the studio is clearly audible. There's quite a lot of microscopic insect activity going on under the carpet of hiss, but, with the exception of four isolated guitar twangs, three four-second flute notes and a ticking clock, it's impossible to determine whether any of the sounds were played as opposed to being merely "sound resulting from the physical action of playing music", to quote Toshiya Tsunoda's sleevenotes.

Reasons for distinguishing between music and sound, and performer and listener, seem to have disappeared altogether. Listening intently to *Septet*, trying to work out who's doing what and even what's on the album, as opposed to what's leaking in from the outside world, is a kind of performance in itself. Tsunoda is right to describe it as "a curious document", but – hopefully – wrong in describing it as "not the kind of music that attempts to elicit subtle listening – if it were, the background noises would not be offhandedly left in". On the contrary, if you're not prepared to give this your full attention you might as well not bother putting it on at all, and listen to yourself sitting in your armchair instead.

DAN WARBURTON

Nathamuni Brothers
Madras 1974
FIRE MUSEUM CD

A military band marching briskly down the street may have been the first encounter with Western music for many Asian countries. In fact for a long time people probably thought that brass bands were the only music the West had to offer. The ancient tradition of South Indian Carnatic music, far older than the more familiar North Indian ragas, enthusiastically adopted instruments like saxophone and clarinet. Carnatic saxophonist Kadri Gopalnath toured the UK with Evan Parker a few years ago. And now here is a delightful set, recorded in 1974 by roaming ethnomusicologist Robert Garfias, from a Carnatic brass band, pitched somewhere between a classical outfit and a wedding band.

Leader Lakshimipathi Naidu squeals fluently on high-pitched E flat clarinet. Kriti melodies by early 19th century composer Tyagaraja are cheery devotional hymns, performed in unison by two clarinets, sax, trumpet and euphonium. Then short ragas are combined into medleys, over wonderful swaying beats from a double-headed drum and the chink of finger cymbals. Some tunes quote Western brass directly: a quick warm-up waltz and a so-called "English Note", which turns out to be an incongruous version of the reel "The Irish Washerwoman".

There are occasional echoes of Albert Ayler's raids on the marching band tradition, but although the surface may be busy, with clarinettist and drummer taking turns to display virtuosity, there's a massively relaxed quality to the whole thing. You can hear that, for all its oddity, this group sit astride centuries of oral tradition. Their sense of emotional depth and easygoing spirituality owes a lot to the excellent drumming. The release includes photos of the musicians, but the sketchy sleevenotes sadly don't extend to revealing the drummer's name.

CLIVE BELL

Oorutaichi
Drifting My Folklore
OKIMI CD

Osaka based Oorutaichi has rubbed shoulders with Keiji Haino and Ruins, collaborated with oddball popsters Momus and Taku Hannoda, and been producing his solo take on pop since 1999. The present release is a mixture of tracks from his 2003 debut CD *Oorutaichi Yori Yoyo* and an even earlier EP also bearing the title *Drifting My Folklore*.

Sadly, the heady T Rex homage "Negro Shrine Jungle" is not included, but here are ten examples of Oorutaichi's high-spirited and outlandish styling, often featuring invented language. There's plenty of Residents-style weirdness and geeky Aphex Twin-esque mucking about, while his utterly synthetic soundworld seems in direct descent from Yellow Magic Ochestra. A typically hyperactive multiple synth pile-up on "Beshaby" is offset, or possibly made worse, by a whining vocal. "Pan 1 Nonaki" is the only track to slow down, and a kind of exotica emerges, though Oorutaichi's jungle is made of microprocessors rather than lianas. The sturdiest song is "UiUi-Mar-Chan", where a stuttering organ supports a decent melody, like a high-speed sea shanty from some digitised ocean.

In Oorutaichi's world the machines have long since taken over, but the effort has sent them round the bend, where they encounter their dada reflections. Manically cheerful, it's like being trapped in a gym full of exercising holograms, and the song "MISEN Gymnastics" indeed incorporates a keep fit routine.

CLIVE BELL

Jessica Pavone
Quotidian
PEACOCK CD

Mary Halvorson & Jessica Pavone
On And Off
SKIRL CD

People
Misbegotten Man
I & EAR CD

The currency of New York composer-improvisors Jessica Pavone and Mary Halvorson's music is clarity. They believe in tonality – and their music is *very* tonal – but it's not the kind of tonality that apologises for atonality or is sorry that Cecil Taylor exists.

There's a moment in the first section of Pavone's chamber ensemble piece *Quotidian* that encapsulates her ability to transform a naked – and potentially naive – tonal gesture into something special. *Quotidian* is an exploration of "four temporal landmarks that occur within each single day". Against instrumental layers that move at different rates to symbolise a state of semiconscious waking, Pavone tosses in a fragment of piano material that sounds like a clumsy mistake. It's a gestural ugly duckling, with melodic contours that stick out like they're slipping on a banana skin. But she justifies herself in retrospect by boldly repeating it. She repeats it again, then augments its shape until the gestures trickle down to the rest of the ensemble.

Pavone's horse-sure dealings with such contradictory moments compositionally derive from her tactile experiences of musical material as an improvisor. Her most high profile gig is with Anthony Braxton, but it's with Mary Halvorson on guitar that violinist-violist Pavone has done most of her workshopping. *On And Off* is fired by deadpan whimsy that can give way to darker melancholy, as in the obsessively nervy "I Am Fine". The title track elevates whimsy to the sublime, as the duo sign "On And Off" to an oom-pah

new from Cold Blue



John Luther Adams *Red Arc/Blue Veil*

Powerful, monolithic music that combines architectural and multi-tempo/polyrhythmic processes with lush surface textures. It ties together extremes—shifting color fields and monochromatic planes; quietly shimmering textures and "noisy" roars; the wild and the constrained. Features pianist Stephen Drury, percussionist Scott Deal, and others and Adams's ghostly electronic "auras" (sampled and processed sounds derived from the acoustic instruments).

"Adams' music sounds like it has nothing to accomplish. It simply exists, hanging in mid-air, waiting to be listened to." —*All-Music Guide*

"The variety of dreamy textures Adams achieves with a few simple materials is lovely." —Kyle Gann, *American Music in the 20th Century*

"The sound of this music is that of overlapping planes of sound ... this is music from someone who knows who he is and what he wants." —*Fanfare*

[Hear an excerpt on *Wire Tapper 18* (in the October '07 issue of *The Wire*.)]

www.coldbluemusic.com

Size Matters Non-standard formats, sifted and sampled

A Northern Chorus *Chained To The Truth* BLACK MOUNTAIN MUSIC 7" By covering a track from Low and another emanating from Mojave 3, these Canadians stake a claim to a certain kind of readymade slow moving dream-pop majesty. Of course, my personal opinion is predicated upon my decision to ignore the label's instructions to play this record at 45 rpm. So your own mileage may vary.

Bastard Noise & Antennacle *Bastard Noise & Antennacle* KITTY PLAY 7" Nice mailborne collab between one of the underground's best known spew-merchants, and a much newer trio (also featuring Eric Wood). The music is a collage of found sounds, tape created rhythms and flows of voices and noise that wind through each other's open holes. It's a surprisingly delicate record, with all the shrieks held to a very low decibel level. And really, I think it's better for all the subtlety.

George Brigman & Split *Blowin' Smoke/Drifting* BONAFIDE 7" 30 years later, this still sounds as good as it did the first time I reviewed it. A Baltimore guitar legend with a single lost LP under his belt (*Jungle Rot*), Brigman reappeared in 1977 with this shockingly great punk/Groundhogs merger. He recorded a follow-up album, then disappeared again, until recently resurfacing with the excellent *Rags In Skull* CD. There's always time for Brigman. And this 7" reissue represents one of his best moments.

D+D *Properties/Ribbons* COCO ART/PUBLIC EYESORE 7" An interesting collaboration between Omaha's Dereck Higgins and Atlanta's Dino Felipe, two idiosyncratic musicians with a lot of weirdness between them. Dino probably handles the electronics, Dereck the strings, but that may just be my imagination. Regardless, the first side is a lovely electro-plonk in a style not unlike some of Eugene Chadbourne's classic work, the flip is plonk-electro almost like some of Hrvatski's stuff. Charming.

Dead Western *Plays A Mandolin* FUCK THE BASTARDS 7" Whoah. I guess this is the old sax guy from Antennas Erupt!, but it's the closest thing I've heard in a good long while to the creepier recordings of Tiny Tim. Mandolin, violin and a voice that alternately quivers and bar rumbles, gives this a passing veneer of Current 93 sport-oddity, but Dead Western are honestly beyond categoric comprehension and interesting as hell.

Fades *Caca/Fruit Machine* GENEPOOL 7" Double A sided London pop-punk by a quartet who sound eager to please. Reminds me of the goddamn Vibrators or something.

Fursaxa *Maidenstone* MOUNT SAINT MOUNTAIN 7" I love the sound of Tara Burke in all her guises. Her recent live stuff with sparsely layered throbs of vocals has been known to stop my pulse, but I am finding myself digging this new (very different) workout quite a bit. The A side is all strummed acoustic guitar and folkie lip-quiver, the flip is a dense pile-up of keys (maybe) and reverb and guitar and buzz. A great combination? Jimmy Carter says "Yes".

Heavy Winged *On The Marble Cliffs* TRENSMAT 7"+CD Great single by a somewhat Brooklyn based trio, whose reputation as generators of high volume improvisational nightmare flot-sike has been getting pretty massive over the last year or so. The two tracks on the lathe-cut single are wildly feedbacking stabs into the dark – powerful psych trio stuff a little bit in line with some Japanese riff-creators, but not imitative in the least. The CD has another 16 minute track and was supposed to have QuickTime live footage as well, but I can't find any video files. Maybe it's just me.

Lay All Over It *Never Too Fat To Fly* LABORATORY STANDARD RECORDINGS 7" Chicago jazzbos, leaning so far back into their shadows they almost disappear. Basic line-up is a bass/drum duo, but there's a guest saxophonist here as well, and one of the duo handles off-hand vocalese. The vibe reminds a little bit of Arkansaw Man, but I haven't actually played them for at least two decades. Still, I remember being able to click fingers to it. Which is certainly the reaction this group are looking to evoke as well.

Ludlow *Gold Paint +3* MYBABYGOTWITHLUDLOW 7" Interesting revo-pigfuck 7", selfconsciously in the style of Amphetamine Reptile and those who sailed with them back in the late 80s. OK. Actually, this sounds a lot better than OK. Thick, murky guitar raunch from a Pittsburgh trio who have been around for long enough to remember this stuff from its first go-round. Lumpy, weedy and throbbing. What more could anyone want?

Phosphene & Friends *I See A Sign Defined/Ask Me No Questions* PICKLED EGG 7" Glagow's John Cavanagh (aka Phosphene) continues delving into the ranks of John Peel's Dandelion label with this new release. Previously he has recorded with Lol Coxhill (whose *Ear Of The Beholder* was Dandelion's sole double LP set). Now he has connected with Dandelion's resident chanteuse, Bridget St John, for a lovely and fascinating set of tunes. On "I See A Sign Defined", Bridget takes the lead vocal and her dark voice wraps elegantly around Cavanagh's arrangements. The flip features the Glasgow trio, Nalle, singing one of Bridget's signature tunes to near-communal effect. What a nice pairing.

Fursaxa



Play Guitar *You're An Outline/Try Not To Lie* BLACK MOUNTAIN MUSIC 7" Canadian trio with a solid outside fix on pop dynamics. They have a jittery edge that recalls The Feelies a bit, but it's wrapped in something both doughy and disjointed. Does that mean it sounds like The Bongos? Not really.

Snake Apartment/Landed *Split* CORLEONE 7" One of the better, filthier Grunge-fests to scoot down the pike in a while. Both groups are from Providence, Rhode Island. One of them, Snake Apartment, is fairly youthful, the other is one of the more legendary outfits in a city that has a fair share of them. Sludge so thick you'll be happy to call it pie.

Sound Of Singles *Sings Seger* 7 & T 7" The steel guitarist from Chapel Hill's Moriah grew up in Michigan. When he was 13 his dad took him to see Bob Seger. This eventually led to his becoming a musician. After he moved away from the state he started recording Seger songs to send his dad as presents. Now, he is treating us to his dad's secret cache. Not being wildly conversant with Seger's songbook, it's hard for me to comment on the performances, other than to say they sound heartfelt in a slightly weird and broken way. And I keep wondering where the heck that ocarina-like sound is coming from. Is it just tricky accordion playing or what?

Squidlaunch *Live On WFMU May 1995* INTERPLANETARY MUSIC/CARDBOARD/BONESCRAPER/$ TREE/SPOOKY TREE/LFA 7" Five songs, six labels, seven inches. This is totally hot, highly reckless post-core noise jazzbo hollering from a bunch of guys who flared bright for a brief moment in a former decade, but went down with all their teeth buzzing. It's a beautiful no-fi document of time sliced thin and wrapped around yowling trombones. Interesting to note that a couple of these jimokes ended up on the same softball team as Chris Corsano, Scott Foust, John Shaw, Anna Klien and Matt Krefting. Guess those guys all just love to swing a bat.

Untied States *Bye Bye Bi-Polar/These Dead Birds* BEET 7" This Atlanta sextet occupy an odd kind of stylistic zone. On one hand they're 'rock', but they obviously yearn for something more, and create all kinds of Progressive and Hardcore textures for themselves to explore, albeit all inside a larger quirk-rock context. The music unfolds as though it's a sequence of suites strung together, and it recalls (at least procedurally) the work of the People's Victory Orchestra and Chorus. Hadn't thought of *them* in a while.

Wooden Shjips *Sol '07* A SICK THIRST/HOLY MOUNTAIN 7" Best record so far from these Santa Cruz thug psych bruisers. The song's split in twain (and may be forthcoming on their Holy Mountain LP), but this 7" is a benefit for Food Not Bombs, so there's a reason to check it out. These champs remain the sole dopers ingenious enough to understand (let along explore) the sonic/conceptual bridge between Blue Cheer and Suicide. And the results will stun at 50 paces. **BYRON COLEY**

CA Celestial & Bill Wells *Somewhere Under A Rainbow* WEE BLACK SKELF 7" Debut from Cari Anderson, former member of Glasgow's International Airport, now flying collaboratively with Falkirk's Bill Wells. Tangling together a glass bead game of brittle acoustic guitar, both "Somewhere Under A Rainbow" and "Bill Wells In The Ochils" are deoxygenating non-pop songs. On "Rainbow", Anderson's world-weary sigh of a voice seeps out from under her breath as though every word is tantamount to her last thought. Everything's slightly dazed, as though it's written and recorded under ether. A gorgeously suffocating single.

The Garbage & The Flowers/Entlang *Coronation* TUFF PUFFIN MC Once touted by *The Wire*'s Nick Cain as "the best Xpressway band that never was", The Garbage & The Flowers were one of New Zealand's most mysterious outfits, and though they've since relocated to Sydney, Australia, they've lost not one iota of their wayward lo-fi charm. *Coronation* is a perfectly righteous collection of their post-Velvets folk-pop. On "Love Comes Slowly Now", they channel the fragile spirits of Beat Happening and Vashti Bunyan; "Prince Of Thieves" and "Lucy In Her Pink Jacket" both drench diamond-cut melodies with avalanches of noise. A couple of wintry songs from offshoot outfit Entlang end the cassette.

Ghost Of An Octopus *Two* FIRSTPERSON 3" CD-R English duo Stuart Octopus and Ghost Of Joincey don't mess about: after a few minutes of low-level, scene-setting clatter, they dive straight for the necks of their bass and guitar, tearing snarling lines of electric threat from smoking amplifiers. Joincey is on particularly good form, echoing the soaring noise blowouts of fellow English underground magus Ashtray Navigations, while maintaining his own defiantly lowbrow approach to elevation through desecration.

Lucky Luke *Reynardine/Hori Horo* WEE BLACK SKELF 7" Glasgow neofolkies Lucky Luke's relative faithfulness to 1960s folk-rock feels a little unadventurous at first, but they have the tone of delivery just right and they adeptly balance traditional melodies with arrangements that hover between rockist and Baroque, something a lot easier to talk about than actually manifest. It's a good strategy, particularly on their tender, measured rendition of "Reynardine". **JON DALE**

BRYONY MCINTYRE

accompaniment that wants to go some place but is trapped like a bee in a jam jar. It's an absurdist statement supreme that says what it needs to and just stops.

Halvorson's guitar playing is impressively honed, hinting at refined classicism but preferring to drawl in honky, twangy bits of rough. "The Clouds" contains another geeky tonal phrase, a close cousin of the piano phrase in *Quotidian*, that Halvorson and Pavone play with faux-politeness before imploding it from the inside. That same dry, throbbing tone of Halvorson's guitar is one trademark of ironic punk duo People, the other being Kevin Shea's hyper drumming. Halvorson's falsetto voice bleats ludicrously convoluted lyrics that the Byzantine metrics of Shea's drums seem intent on tripping up. With titles like "But, I Like My Rotten Head (Sleeper Cells Were His Bailiwick Until That Fateful Moment When The Heart Stopped Pumping)", abrupt turnarounds of tempo, sudden silences and freaking out instrumental interludes, I can't decide whether this pair are touched by genius, or just touched.

PHILIP CLARK

Francis Plagne
Francis Plagne

MISTLETONE/SYNAESTHESIA CD

On his second album, Australian bedroom dreamer Francis Plagne redoubles the wide-eyed wonder of its 2005 predecessor, *Idle Bones*. A songwriter whose impatience with form suggests creative bi-polarity, he is unwilling to settle within one idiom. *Francis Plagne* loosely slots into a trajectory of experimental song/sound art crossover that stretches from Caetano Veloso's *Araça Azul* through to Broadcast.

The home recorded fidelity casts his songs in an amber glow that's recalls other 'radio stuck in fog' outcasts Ariel Pink and Lamborghini Crystal, but passages of improvisation and drone upset the pop equilibrium. On "Replace U With An A", 1960s pop is cleft in two by percussive rattling that's littered across the mise en scène, while "Arrested In Vasuli" is modular in its construction, tacking jack-in-the-box melodies onto bubbling noise. Plagne treats his records as jigsaw puzzles, with the melody of "Vasuli" subsequently recast for piano on "Maidenhead Before Grandchild".

The aesthetic is clear from the song titles, which invert the English language, everything submitting to Plagne's cryptic internal logic. Shifting from freeform freakout to song as altered state, the album's enigmatic character floats close to The Red Krayola, whose influence hangs heavy over both the vocal delivery and lyrics. Concealing meaning through non-sequitur and surrealist juxtaposition, these songs are delivered in a halting, soft lisp, whispering floods of words that ricochet downstream like driftwood.

JON DALE

Pluramon
The Monstrous Surplus

KARAOKE KALK CD

Marcus Schmickler
Altars Of Science

EDITIONS MEGO CD+DVD

Marcus Schmickler's discography is a monument to his wide-ranging enthusiasms as well as to his Stakhanovite workrate. His music ranges from the rigorously austere to the naively melodic, from the purely electronic and the tightly organised to the organically acoustic and the entirely improvised; some projects draw heavily on his academic background as a contemporary composer while others reflect a giddy love for lush, swooning pop textures. The two wildly contrasting releases here mark out these far-flung boundaries perfectly.

The Monstrous Surplus is the fifth album that Schmickler has released in his Pluramon guise – a project that's evolved away from the cerebral post-rock of the mid-90s Mille Plateaux releases, when co-conspirators included the likes of Jan St Werner and Jaki Liebezeit, and towards the languid, shoegazing pastures occupied by Morr Music and Ulrich Schnauss. This latest album renews Schmickler's working relationship with Julee Cruise, whose dazed and massively reverbed vocals swam through the hallucinatory scores that Angelo Badalamenti composed for David Lynch circa *Twin Peaks*. Her voice – rich, yet strangely anonymous – fits perfectly into these pretty but somehow uninflected songs, packaged between sheets of wispily distorted sound. Everything in the mix is cushioned by an amniotic haze, which means that even the most angular tracks, like the squirming, restless "Fresh Aufhebung", fail to land telling punches of excitement. The lack of urgency is thrown into sharp relief by a bizarre cover of Sham 69's "If The Kids Are United", in which Jimmy Pursey's plastic borstal posturing is replaced by mannered Teutonic detachment, and the original's neanderthal pummelling gives way to the deliberate shimmer of a celestially processed tambourine.

Altars Of Science is something entirely different – hardcore computer music, beatless, unrelenting and thoroughly alien. These eight untitled tracks are a mass of clashing, bristling sinewaves; they rise and fall with queasy logic, throwing off teeming clouds of brushed steel tension and building to frenzies of abstraction. Experienced in stereo, it's both deeply unsettling and obscurely invigorating, but the release also includes a 5.1 surround sound mix on DVD which must rank amongst 2007's most intense audio experiences.

CHRIS SHARP

Prurient
Adam Tied To Stone

PYGMY/BLOSSOMING NOISE LP

It's easy to misread Prurient, the solo alias of American noise demagogue Dominick Fernow, as reductive BDSM hostility. Admittedly, titles like "Returning Rape" fall into the hands of those predisposed to pass his practice off as wanton wallowing in the dark side. Much like Whitehouse's references to serial killers and totalitarian rule, Fernow uses his framing devices as arch provocation, evacuating moral stability from the equation while holding a mirror up to society's psychological extremes.

Fernow is also close to Whitehouse in his mastery of noise design. He harnesses elemental forces through forceful volume, improvisatory tactics and gutted, knotted-chest vocals, topped by a carefully trained ear for tone. His obsessive nature extends to the finely wrought tenor of noise, flipping conventional wisdoms on the genre: here, the coarse grain of overload speaks with great eloquence, and the physicality is pure mainlining of rock amplification – much like Merzbow's much quoted reference to noise distilling rock down to its 'guitar smashing' elements.

Unlike predecessors *Black Vase* and *Pleasure Ground, Adam Tied To Stone* doesn't suggest any great formal leaps, but it reflects Prurient's intractable audio persona exceptionally well. "Returning Rape" is actually the set's highlight, with a mournful, drifting melody only just audible beneath the dense threshing of Fernow's power electronics. There's fierce beauty in the density of opener "Adam" and the ghostly night-flight of the closing minutes of "Tied To Stone": like the best noise, it's all about the pleasure of displeasure.

JON DALE

Sawako
Madoromi

ANTICIPATE CD

On *Madoromi*'s sleeve, New York based Japanese sound and video artist Sawako lists herself as playing "apples, ripple, voice, music box, things, others", while recording engineer Pandatone is credited with "sleeping melancholy". Sure enough, her pieces suggest an approach to gathering and processing sounds that treats them as little chunks of environment bound up with memories and atmosphere, to be gently scooped up and transplanted like delicate ferns into a new soil.

Like Max Richter or Library Tapes, Sawako proves adept at conveying the sounds of people inhabiting spaces, such as in "Passepass", which isolates a child's sudden cough against a backdrop of footsteps. Alongside the gentle humour of the everyday, there are moments of reflection and unease, most notably on "Appled Soapbox", where an elderly person's recollection becomes jumbled, incoherent dialogue. Although many of her samples are hard to identify – it's difficult to pick out those apples from among the other scrapes, clicks and rattles – they all carry a warm, homely quality, softening the edges of the decaying chimes, wineglass harmonics and fragile, echoing vocal fragments that would otherwise put *Madoromi* at the more minimal, Ambient end of electronica.

Unfurling gently in a panoramic rather than linear style, in lesser hands, *Madoromi*'s tracks might have ended up too insubstantial to really make an impression. But whatever vague qualities those "things, others" possess, Sawako has captured them with charm and grace.

ABI BLISS

Elliott Sharp
Tectonics, Solo Beijing

KWAN YIN CD

Multi-instrumentalist Elliott Sharp is, like fellow New Yorker John Zorn, a restless musician working with consistent intensity across a range of musical styles and in unpredictable contexts. His vast discography encompasses earthy blues, avant rock, coruscating string quartets, movie soundtracks, interpretations of Thelonious Monk tunes, electroacoustic investigations and much else besides. This set of performances, recorded live in Beijing last year, presents him alone with electric guitar, expanded and enhanced through his 'Tectonics' electronic set-up. It's quintessential Sharp – concentrated, rhythmically taut and intricate, fired up with enthusiasm for the brash, antagonistic sound of the guitar, yet strictly disciplined and subtle in his real-time shaping and arrangement of that sound.

Technically and sonically, *Tectonics, Solo Beijing* recalls at times pioneers of extended guitar vocabulary such as Fred Frith, Henry Kaiser and Hans Reichel, not to mention Sharp's own early work. There's plenty of improvisatory edge and stylistic flexibility in this music, but there's also a strong sense of the practised composer's overview and accumulated know-how. Tapping the strings percussively has become a favoured technique in Sharp's playing; it returns repeatedly to affirm rhythmic definition, supplemented very occasionally with drum machine grooves. His live processing, on the other hand, swells and diffuses the guitar's metallic precision into orchestrated sweeps and textured layering. There's a healthy evasiveness to Sharp's musical identity, but if you're looking for somewhere to anchor it, this fine set is as good a place as any.

JULIAN COWLEY

Skepta
Greatest Hits

BOY BETTER KNOW CD

One of the most fluent of all Grime MCs, ex-Roll Deep and Meridian member Skepta, aka Joseph Adenuga, first sprang to fame with 2005's hit "Private Caller". A key figure in the genre's underground resurgence in late 2006, Skepta's lyrics are direct and surgical, unlike the manic fervour of Wiley or the roundabout metaphors of Trim, demanding rewinds not through bad boy attitude so much as precisely calibrated diction, measuring his syllables to the beats like a locksmith moulding a key to the door.

Titled with typically economical bravado, *Greatest Hits* is actually simply Skepta's debut album, a collection of largely self-produced new tracks with a couple of older numbers for context. His productions are as straightforward as his lyrics, with boom-bap beats and irrepressible, itchy melodies. Working on his own territory, his vocals are effortless almost to the point of autopilot, lacking the breakneck lyrical accelerations that have characterised his appearances on pirate radio. Without rival MCs to bounce off, his omnipresent boasts now echo around in a self-referential bubble.

Within this circumscribed zone, there's a rubbery bounce that just about manages to keep *Greatest Hits* in funky perpetual motion, with Skepta's deep voice skipping over stuttered syllables such as *"send men up to the sky with two wings and a halo"* like a pebble on a lake. But while this set has a consistency absent from many Grime albums, it lacks the velocity and impact with which Skepta has laid waste to many competing MCs and established his reputation, and somehow *Greatest Hits* feels curiously inert.

DEREK WALMSLEY

Sillage
Sillage

SEDIMENTAL CD

Sillage are a duo comprised of American sound artists Brendan Murray and Seth Nihil, and this, their first CD, relies heavily on

The Compiler Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Well Deep: 10 Years Of Big Dada BIG DADA 2×CD A ten year anniversary is a big enough achievement for any independent record label. Then again, Ninja Tune offshoot Big Dada has always had plenty to be proud of. Founded by journalist Will Ashon as a hiphop outlet with a difference, this London based imprint has, for the past decade, consistently explored the genre's less travelled pathways. Frequently blurring the lines between rap, rock and abstract electronica, *Well Deep* draws together a wide selection of underground hits from the past eight years. Roots Manuva's seminal British soundclash "Witness (1 Hope)", the scuffed up posse flows of New Flesh's "Stick & Move", the bizarro-world fantasy of Infinite Livez's "Worcestershire Sauce" and Grime from scene kingpin Wiley all underline a fruitful and forward-looking commitment to UK MC culture. Meanwhile, out on the fringes Mike Ladd's Infesticons and Majesticons projects, the beautiful Boards Of Canada remix of cLOUDDEAD's "Dead Dogs Two" and King Geedorah, MF Doom and Mr Fantastik's "Anti-Matter" all show that music of any kind is usually at its best when it refuses to recognise boundaries. Still, two tracks by the perennially turgid Diplo and Spank Rock's grating "Sweet Talk" do go some way toward proving that no one can get it right all the time. **DAVE STELFOX**



Infinite Livez

Cadenza Classic/Contemporary CADENZA 2×CD The rise of the South American connection has been one of the most attention grabbing developments in minimal electronic music of the last few years. While avant party boy Ricardo Villalobos may be the first name to spring to mind these days, Luciano remains another not to be overlooked. Lighter of touch than Villalobos's maze like trips down the rabbit hole, this Swiss/Chilean producer's signature sound tends more towards the structure of traditional Deep House – with a difference. Among many others – including Perlon, Klang, Mental Groove and Transmat – the artist's own Cadenza Recordings has served as home for his lithe and seductive rhythms. This double CD set collects, on its first disc, the imprint's most recent releases, its seamless mix finding common ground between a diverse selection of styles, including Petre Inspirescu's "Racakadoom" and Luciano's own "Tonerres". Meanwhile, disc two pulls together six 'classics', mainly centred on the label's owner, either in collaboration, as on the terrific "Orange Mistake" with Quenum, or alone on "Bomberos". While many others frequently confuse monotony with sophistication, Luciano's supple grooves and virtuosic, multi-tonal percussion strike the perfect balance between hip-tugging swing and blissed out immersion. **DAVE STELFOX**

Cotton: Dragon's Eye Second Anniversary DRAGON'S EYE CD The Dragon's Eye label seems to operate, more often than not, on the soft-focus, more Ambient edge of electronica, and *Cotton*, an anniversary compilation, trades heavily in the droneworks that typify musics of many electronics based genres nowadays. But the weight of silence is integral to Kamram Sadeghi's "Untitled" (from his *Kha* series), which proceeds initially in tightly honed fits and starts, with pauses of various durations between sections, before eventually coming together as a funky, slinky piece, trace-like rather than boring. The soundworld of Manning/Novak's "Feeling Alone All Together" is guitar based, with maximal processing of the 'studio' (or software induced) ambience, and although it's perfectly satisfactory (ie well made) it provides, to be sure, few musical pleasures or surprises.

Unfortunately, what's true of the Manning/Novak track is true of much of the material on *Cotton*, which contains little by way of challenge and sounds like much of a muchness as far as contemporary electronica is concerned. One could easily imagine several of these rather anonymous-sounding compositions providing music of a non-commital (ie space-filling) nature for television documentaries, something to enhance a moment rather than provide it in and of itself. **BRIAN MARLEY**

Airport Symphony ROOM40 2×CD Coming in a metal case that resembles, appropriately perhaps, a laptop, *Airport Symphony* was commissioned by the Queensland Music Festival and Brisbane Airport Corporation. Recorded and put together by Lawrence English, each piece "represents a personal meditation on aspects of travel in the modern age" in which no point of the planet is inaccessible. Pieces feature source recordings made by English from around Brisbane Airport.

Experimental musicians are frequent fliers, so they are presumably meditating upon many humdrum hours of their own existence. The awkward question of carbon emissions is sidestepped – rather, the relationship between the vast sonic tapestry of flight, from the ambient chatter of vast departure lounges, jet engines, rubber hitting Tarmac and the serenity of cruise control are reflected in the tapestries woven by the likes of Tim Hecker, Fennesz, David Grubbs and Francisco López. Each, in their different way, reflects the attendant reassurance, anxiety, perma-humdrumness and awe, power and sense of disconnection associated with flying. Highlights include the long-haul, serenely evocative airborne swathes of Stephan Mathieu's "Lux-Son", Richard Chartier's (relatively) voluminous "Retrieval Path", which captures the eerie palpableness of airports at their most quiet and Taylor Deupree's "Fear Of Flying", banking slowly left and right, locked in an Ambient holding pattern. **DAVID STUBBS**

I Hate Music: Output Recordings 1996–2006 OUTPUT 2×CD Output Records shut up shop in 2006, following ten years of adding a welcome scruffy, homebrewed, openended sensibility to a dance scene that was in danger of becoming a little too slick and superstar-fixated. Early releases from Fridge ("Lojen") and, out of them, Four Tet ("Glasshead") owe a little something to DJ Shadow, boxcar rhythm carriages bearing electronic squiggles and archive vocal samples. Gramme's "Crooks And Criminals" saw the label help scratch out a punk/funk blueprint, Sonovac do a neat electronic number on The Cramps' "Human Fly", while Luke Abbott, with "B,b,b,b,b,b,b,b,b,b,b", throws some of Autechre's rapidfire electronica up into the air.

This compilation is nicely all over the place – from the Old School funky flute wigout of Kreeps' "All I Want To Do Is Break Some Hearts" to the satirical Acid bathos of Mu's "Paris Hilton" (well, I'm assuming it was satirical). Output founder Trevor Jackson eventually wound up the label in some despondency, and there's an enervated feel to the last two or three tracks on this compilation, particularly Mongrel Wireless's "You And I", as if they knew the batteries were running down. Despite the melancholy, however, the quality level remains high. A shame they're no longer operating. **DAVID STUBBS**

Expansion-Contraction MINUS CD/2×12" The popularity of Richie Hawtin's brand of minimalism is a fascinating anomaly; his music is relentlessly austere, yet is the soundtrack for some of the world's most hedonistic dancefloors, from mainstream glamour spots to seriously druggy underground after-parties. In large part, this is due to the alchemical transformation these clicks and cuts undergo on large soundsystems, with the severely reductionist sounds becoming heart-bouncingly visceral. Away from the club, however, this music can make less sense. *Expansion-Contraction*, the latest compilation from Hawtin's Minus imprint, comes laden with conceptual statements of intent, which, for all their eloquence, fail to excite. It's difficult to get worked up by artists promising to "explore the relationship between Sound and Silence, experimenting with the interplay between two opposing forces" when such 'experiments' are now so ubiquitous in minimal Techno.

So attention falls on the raw sonics, and another anomaly crops up: it's the tracks which make the most overt plays for the dancefloor that are most successful at home. Marc Houle's "Porch" disorientates the listener by casting out and reeling in spools of synth as if someone's getting trigger-happy with the fast-forward/rewind buttons, and then unveils a delightfully nasty Acid coda. Even better, Heartthrob's "Roundabout" offers glimpses of silvery Deep House textures gently smashed into crystals. In contrast, there's a dreariness to the submarine bleeps and insectoid rattling of some of the sparser, more cerebral, tracks here, although Hawtin's now rare appearance under his Plastikman alias is a compelling example of how creepy and forbidding such music can still be. **SIMON HAMPSON**

Space And Time HOTFLUSH CD The emergence of the cartoonishly dark style pejoratively known as 'wobble step' has been identified as a possible sign of the bad times to come for the dubstep phenenomenon. *Space And Time*, a label compilation from North London's Hotflush Recordings, is an impressive pre-emptive strike against dubstep's potential creative cul de sac. Chief among the many high points are the tracks by Scuba, the alias of Hotflush founder Paul Rose. He slices his basslines into stuttering speedfreak fits on "Out There", recalling both early 90s Hardcore rave's euphoria and Omni Trio's more considered breakouts. The glowing sunrise textures of his other contribution, "Inmost", bring Boards of Canada-esque bucolic nostalgia, bird calls and all, to dubstep's usually steadfastly urban bass excavations. Elsewhere, on Boxcutter's "Philly" and Elemental's "Raw Material", links are drawn to both Techno and hyperkinetic Jungle, as the beats are scrunched up into tight balls of snap and crackle, then jolted by sour, metallic clangs.

Not every experiment is so successful; Jazzsteppa's attempt to transplant dubstep to a live drum and trombone set-up, for example, verges dangerously close to coffee table turgidity. For the most part, though, *Space And Time* upends familiar dubstep tropes impressively; in place of the stereotypical half-step beats it has anxiously skippy rhythms, instead of stoned weightiness a glistening, warm gauziness. **SIMON HAMPSON**

TOM OLDHAM

material recorded during two performances in 2003 and 2004. Nihil has released dozens of small (sometimes minuscule) edition CD-Rs, and in his means (and aesthetic) he's an eclecticist. Murray can be described as more of an electronicist, but again he's not easy to pin down. The basso profundo, unstable drone kicking off "Ebb/cess", the CD's first track, is a bit misleading. The listener is led to expect a slow enrichment or unfolding of material, but almost immediately the sonic ground shifts and gives way to field recordings of a somewhat ambiguous nature.

The tracks are mostly very brief, hence uncharacteristic of fully improvised (which these almost certainly are) performances, suggesting that only excerpts from lengthier pieces have been used, but that merely serves to focus attention on the presentation of the material. There's a shapeliness that's unusual in abstract music of this kind, and no matter how fractured, layered or collage-like the sounds become, they always seem to fit the immediate purpose, the requirements of the composition, and the trajectory of the music on the CD as a whole. In fact, the way the pieces fit together and imply a kind of sonic 'narrative' is extremely pleasing. The final track, "Waving", ends as the CD began, with a drone, but here Murray (who's known for this kind of thing) and Nihil make the most of it. *Sillage* is, in other words, a hugely satisfying piece of work.

BRIAN MARLEY

Solar Fire Trio
Rise Up
FOREIGN FREQUENCY CD

With a name like Solar Fire Trio and an album title like *Rise Up*, you can guess you're in for an action-packed ride even before you hit the play button. For Fire Music cognoscenti, the instrumentation of the Liverpool based trio – two saxophones and drums – inevitably brings to mind 1976's legendary (and long overdue for reissue) *Bäbi*, Milford Graves's titanic battle with the double-horned attack of Arthur Doyle and Hugh Glover, but the Peter Brötzmann/Han Bennink duo might make for a more appropriate comparison. Not least because drummer Steve Belger studied with Bennink in Holland and clearly shares his fondness for hard-swinging tubthumping groove, and Ray Dikaty's wide vibrato on the tenor often recalls the mighty horn of the man from Remscheid.

But like Doyle, who came to free jazz from a background in honkin' and screamin' R&B, Dikaty cut his teeth in rock, notably in stints with Dr John and Spiritualized, before exploring the nuances of free Improv with the likes of Eddie Prévost and Carlos Zingaro, and there's nothing he likes better than to get down and dirty on the one with Belger's monstrous backbeat. Alto saxophonist Dave Jackson's slightly softer sound (slightly being the operative word) contrasts effectively with Dikaty's impassioned howls, and the rather dry, boxy recording doesn't always do full justice to the subtleties of the more spacious, rhythmically loose opening section of "Rise Up Like The Sun". But it hardly matters once the musicians hit their stride halfway through and in the two extended jams that bookend it. To be played damn loud, or not at all.

DAN WARBURTON

The Splinter Orchestra
The Splinter Orchestra
SPLITREC CD

The Splinter Orchestra is a large improvising ensemble from Sydney, curated by bassist Clayton Thomas and flautist Jim Denley, joined here by no fewer than 25 other local musicians including Chris Abrahams, Robbie Avenaim, Clare Cooper and Ben Byrne, who also provides informative sleevenotes to this debut release, the culmination of five years' patient research and extensive rehearsal.

Not that it's easy to make out individual voices in these five sprawling tracks, mind. Large-ensemble improvising is a dangerous business, steering a treacherous path between free-for-all sludge, hit-and-miss instant Penderecki/Scelsi and the kind of quasi-dictatorial conduction that can all too easily relegate distinctive individuals to the despised status of mere orchestral lackeys. Here, the former is avoided by concentrating on more colourful instrumentation, including accordion and guzheng, and the latter by subdividing the group into smaller ensembles, each loosely directed by one musician. Timbre and event-density replace pitch and rhythm as defining parameters, and the music finds coherence by restricting itself to one harmonic environment, anchoring itself in gritty drones and loops. As a result, the kind of turn-on-a-dime reactivity of small ensembles just isn't possible – manoeuvring a huge beast like this is like docking an ocean liner.

It soon becomes clear where it's heading, and listening is less a question of wondering where you're going to end up and more one of enjoying the view from the upper deck as the vessel glides inexorably into port.

DAN WARBURTON

Sun
I'll Be The Same
STAUBGOLD CD

There is, if you'll forgive the pun, nothing new under the sun. *The Wire*'s Simon Reynolds is often credited for coining the term 'post-rock' in 1994, but it pops up as early as July 1975 in an article in *Creem* magazine on Todd Rundgren, by James Wolcott. And the hallmarks of post-rock – fragile, almost introspective vocals, a fondness for gently repetitive textures and midtempo, relative harmonic stability – were being explored long before Oren Ambarchi first got behind a drum kit in his early teens.

As if to acknowledge the fact, the music he makes with Chris Townend in Sun often casts an affectionate glance over its shoulder to the glory days of 70s multi-instrumentalists like Rundgren. Vintage electric pianos glisten and organs glow contentedly alongside cutting edge electronics, including field recordings and the discreetly glitched rhythm on the album's most distinctive track, "Bruise Things". The pair seem to be having so much fun playing every instrument in sight in Townend's Big Jesus Burger studio, including timpani, zithers, xylophones, Rhodes, Wurlitzer and Hammond B3 (whose rotating Leslie speakers get a serious workout from Ambarchi) that they occasionally let the textures thicken and the songs stretch out a little more than they probably should. The detachment, irony even, often associated with 90s post-rock – think the cool (in both senses) vibes of Tortoise – is conspicuously absent in the warm late afternoon glow of the six delicate tracks on this all too brief album.

DAN WARBURTON

Sunburned Circle
The Blaze Game
CONSPIRACY CD

The Blaze Game is a collection of edited highlights from a jam session between Finnish group Circle and Massachusetts' Sunburned Hand Of The Man. It sees the former group unshackling their familiar riff-mantras from their moorings and allowing them to unravel into the space set up by Sunburned's rough spontaneity and wayward freakiness.

Much of this leans heavily on Amon Düül II's *Yeti* and *Phallus Dei*, Improv rock that draws on the instrumental manoeuvres of late 60s psychedelia but recontextualises them as brushstrokes on a swirling abstract canvas. The first track, "Majava", for example, is magnificent. Each of the players works around a different pulse, resulting in an undulating latticework of discrete guitar licks, whispered vocal interjections and percussive figures, all swamped in the lushest reverb. But as soon as any of the players fix too heavily on a particular phrase or attempt to provide something more tangible for the music to coalesce around, the magic very rapidly dissipates.

It's only when the 11 players on the album are at their least focused that *The Blaze Game* really comes alive. Too often, certain elements in the group seem to be pushing too hard to move the music forward, even as others are striving to ground the constantly shifting music with a repetitive riff. The only way they find to escape from these moments of impasse is to dissolve into some rather unimaginative sonic freakouts. The ensemble make a glorious sound, certainly, but there's a sluggishness to their collective decision making, as if they've all got together in the studio after the previous night's gig nursing appalling hangovers.

KEITH MOLINÉ

David Sylvian
When Loud Weather Buffeted Naoshima
SAMADHISOUND CD

During a 2006 winter visit to Naoshima, a tiny landmass in Japan's inland sea between mainland Honshu and Shikoku, David Sylvian was invited to produce a work for Standard², an extended artwalk circling the villages of the island. Standard² is the latest initiative in the island's ongoing art makeover that has turned around a declining modern economy principally based on recycling slag and other waste – an industry seemingly totally at odds with Naoshima's rugged prettiness. Naoshima's major patron is the Benesse Corporation, which commissioned architect Tadao Ando to design an art museum and hotel complex at the centre of the island's regeneration. Each hotel room is dedicated to a different artist, while its neighbouring Chichu Art Museum hosts works by Walter de la Maria and Shinro Ohtake, among others. It's not difficult to imagine Sylvian feeling entirely at home in this art shelter, yet his Standard² work is the result of him venturing outdoors to make the natural recordings of the island being buffeted by the loud weather indicated in the title.

Mixed with discreet to the point of being largely unidentifiable contributions of an ensemble made up of Sylvian, Fennesz, Arve Henriksen, Akira Rabelais and *The Wire*'s Clive Bell, these recordings form the basis of the 70 minute piece originally meant to be heard on an MP3 player while strolling (very, very slowly) around the settlement of Honmura, during which the recorded creaks, wind sighs, wave motions and passing traffic noises would reintegrate with the real-time sounds of the village and its surrounds. This artful CD mix, available for a limited time only before becoming a permanent sound installation a Naoshima museum, is a dynamic, wholly absorbing reversioning of the site-specific original, with the odd, violently jarring sonic close-up ramming home the unpredictable nature of the weather movements that inspired it.

BIBA KOPF

To Rococo Rot
ABC123
DOMINO CD

Designed in 1957 by Swiss typographers Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffmann, Helvetica is the predominant sans serif font of today's typesetting. Sleek and efficient, with all clean lines humanised by rounded curves, it retains a peculiar purchase over modern typography, though it sometimes is considered a conformist option for designers. As a sign of its cultural significance, the font's 50th anniversary has been celebrated by a dedicated exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Efficient, orderly design with a touch of the human: it's very To Rococo Rot, and indeed this German electronic trio's latest mini-album was born of a commission celebrating Helvetica's half-century. The Berlin/Düsseldorf group have spent the last 15 years whittling away at similar concerns, building unobtrusive miniatures for their minimal kit, gesturing toward Krautrock, electronic pop and systems music while maintaining natural flow. While they value function over flourish, their approach to process-into-pop never lapses into the robotic: everything breathes.

On *ABC123*, To Rococo Rot downsize their kit to computers and one Yamaha VSS30, removing Ronald Lippok's percussion and Stefan Schneider's plangent, melodic bass from their usual equation. When a group plough their furrow as relentlessly as To Rococo Rot, the details catch you: on "Freitag" and "Post Reprise", their sub rosa patterns don't lock into place with customary precision, while the gilded glide of "Enigma" is less motorik and more flicker-pulse. Helvetica's digital impersonator, Arial, is an ugly bastardisation of the original, but To Rococo Rot's embrace of zeroes and ones is all about precision and streamlining as quicker routes to utilitarian pleasure.

JON DALE

Alexander Turnquist
Faint At The Loudest Hour
VHF CD

Such is the solar influence of John Fahey, whose presence hovers benignly over this album, that he has inspired a host of acolytes, including the likes of Jack Rose and Sir Richard Bishop. You'd think there were lean fingerpickings in the genre Fahey helped

The Boomerang New reissues: rated on the rebound



Junior Boys

Junior Boys *Last Exit* DOMINO CD Judged by their 2004 debut, The Junior Boys were not so much a group as a selfconscious experiment in genre fusion. A project centred around Ontario's Jeremy Greenspan with contributions from Matt Didemus and Johnny Dark, they took the percussive pizzazz of the post-rave era, its Timbaland-style quirks and kinks and two-step Garage's trembling inflections, and added a faintly utopian gloss of early 80s pop, the result resembling The Pet Shop Boys working with Larry Heard. Although this central conceit of updating sepia-tinged pop with cutting edge rhythmic science comes across a little like wishing to dazzle a childhood sweetheart with new found intellectualism, the calculated nature of the project is also key to *Last Exit*'s hidden depths.

The aloof cool of opening track "More Than Real", where limpid synth lines, white soul vocals and microengineered breakbeats shift in graceful parallax layers, is a trademark that runs throughout the album. The musical extrapolation recalls the remix sides of New York disco producer Shep Pettibone, whose 'dubs' were not a guarantee of wildstyle experimentation so much as spacious groove architecture. Rather than reaching an emotional crescendo, there's a kind of perpetual sensuous foreplay throughout *Last Exit*.

Unlike Junior Boys' more placid follow-up *So This Is Goodbye*, the tension between their debut's airbrushed romanticism and rigorous rhythmic science is what lodges it, uneasily, in the memory banks. Beauty and the beats are never quite reconciled, and the way the last 25 years of dance music seem to be searching, unsuccesfully, for a home, make *Last Exit*, whose CD reissue includes contemporaneous remixes from Fennesz and Caribou, one of the most peculiarly out of time records of recent years. **DEREK WALMSLEY**

The Black Dog *Temple Of Transparent Balls* SOMA CD The Black Dog were perhaps the most enigmatic electronica act of the 90s, not just for their seemingly unending mazy melodies, like several music boxes playing at once, but also for the perplexing question of how the British trio managed to share a keyboard between the three of them without squabbling. The creative tensions were presumably never far from the surface, as the trio split acrimoniously after three albums (the cover of their last release *Spanners* shows a black dog whose three heads seem to be struggling to part). More sketchy than their debut *Bytes* and not as emotionally taut as the final album, 1993's *Temple Of Transparent Balls* is apt to be ignored, yet its dry outlines perhaps give the clearest perspective on their dense, intuitive creations. The awkward asymmetries of "Cost I" and "4, 7, 8" are frustrating yet utterly tantalising, enticing your mind to try and mentally rearrange the pieces more congruently. "Cost II" and "The Actor And The Audience" are built from short melodic phrases of a similar abstract, condensed beauty as Library Music (a later solo release under the Black Dog name was entitled *Music For Adverts And Short Films*). Listen closely and the internal tensions of the trio almost seem to be played out in the tangled melodies. **DEREK WALMSLEY**

Harumi ***Harumi*** FALLOUT CD Perhaps the ultimate, yet most obscure testimonial to an era when mutations were the norm, a time when no amount of marketing research could pick a winner. Tom Wilson, whose mid-60s production credits for MGM/Verve included first albums by The Velvet Underground and The Mothers Of Invention, produced the self-titled double LP debut by Japanese psychedelic maven Harumi. Eclecticism was clearly the byword for artist and producer alike, as this curious gem seems assembled equally from limpid rhythms, fragments of melody purloined from the Baroque catalogue and the slick pop of composer Henry Mancini's scores (the latter influence manifesting itself, a generation down the line, within the work another Japanese artist, film composer Joe Hisaishi). "Talk About It", which opens the set, defines all that is weird and wonderful in Harumi's worldview. As the singer yearns to know *"what's over there"*, watery trumpet fanfares and reversed rhythm tracks are further transformed by the jet engine simulation of phase-shifting, in what may be the defining application of that special effect. Harumi's Blake-via-blotter-paper vision was well served by his studio helpers, its potency remaining undimmed down the intervening years. Unfortunately, having prised open the doors of perception, Harumi subsequently vanished. **RICHARD HENDERSON**

Melvin Jackson *Funky Skull* DUSTY GROOVE CD The peerless e-tailer Dusty Groove (and mighty fine bricks and mortar store too) ventures into reissue territory with a series of lovingly restored discs representing the fringes of the crate-digger canon. Long treasured among collectors of outré funk records, *Funky Skull* is a meeting of the minds of the various factions of Chicago's late 60s music scene: a cosmic, on-the-one jam session between the AACM (Lester Bowie, Roscoe Mitchell and Wadada Leo Smith), the Chess/Cadet cadre (Phil Upchurch, Jodie Christian and Morris Jennings) and free radicals like Pete Cosey and Billy Hart. Melvin Jackson was Eddie Harris's bass player and, like his mentor, he hooks his bass up to all manner of flangers, filters and Echoplexes, creating an effect at times comic stoopid (the quacking bassline of "Cold Duck Time") and at others deep-space drift ("Say What", "Dance Of The Dervish"). While Jackson is very much the star of the show, the stellar cast of side players definitely make their presence felt: "Bold & Black" sounds very much like Art Ensemble Of Chicago's "Theme De Yoyo", while drummer Morris Jennings gets seriously busy on the title track. The only disappointment on *Funky Skull* is that Cosey is not given free rein. **PETER SHAPIRO**

Jorge Ben *Força Bruta* DUSTY GROOVE CD Perhaps too dainty for some, too conservative for others, with still more griping that it doesn't have enough of the wild pan-genre promiscuity that characterised Tropicália, 1970's *Força Bruta* is nevertheless a stone cold classic of Brazilian modernism. Firmly grounded in samba (with backing from the great Trio Mocotó) but with tips of the hat to bossa nova and subtle touches of funk and soul, *Força Bruta* is emblematic of Brazil's seemingly national gift for weaving beguiling syncretic music from practically any cloth. Of special note in this regard are the uncredited string arrangements that swirl entrancingly around Fritz Escovão's cuíca on tracks like "Mulher Brasileira" and swoon languidly to provide counterpoint on more rhythmically upbeat tracks like "Charles Jr" and "Pulo, Pulo". The latter track also features nifty Sergio Mendes-style horn riffs, which become Stax-ified on "O Telefone Tocou Novamente". But it is the title track, a charming reworking of the eternal "Tighten Up" groove, that has given this generally dreamy album such cachet among the crate diggers and soul aficionados. Ben himself also lends some grit to the proceedings by adding some rasp to his usual nasal languor, creating something of a minor masterpiece of textural contrast. **PETER SHAPIRO**

Debris' *Static Disposal* ANOPHELES CD A repress of the official, meticulous and only reissue of a now widely appreciated self-released experimental rock LP. Recording in 1975 in Oklahoma, Debris' may never have heard "You And I" by The Silver Apples nor Fifty Foot Hose's "Red The Signpost", but what they learned from glam rock garage bands and art school led them to extend on those noisier late 1960s possibilities. Their record (originally intended to be *Prisoner Of Rock 'N' Roll*, but now known by the label name, *Static Disposal*) belongs to the category of punk avant la lettre that also locates such sci-fi blasts as Canada's Simply Saucer, San Francisco's Chrome and Cleveland's Pere Ubu. Guitarist Oliver Powers says he tried to play his guitar "like... kneading bread dough", and riffs and melody are downplayed in favour of texture and drama, so that The Misfits' "Cough Cool" is as good a reference point as the rawest, heaviest moments of Roxy Music and King Crimson. Liner notes give extensive commentary from group members, and great live material fills up the playing time. **JON BYWATER**

G*Park *Seismogramm* BLOSSOMING NOISE CD Marc Zeier may be a member of Schimpfluch-Gruppe, but his recordings as G*Park are a long way from the abjection and scatology of projects such as Runzelstirn & Gurgelstock or Sudden Infant. Zeier has released a dozen or so albums under the G*Park moniker since the early 80s, and *Seismogramm* (originally a 1990 Schimpfluch LP, reissued here in remastered form with no extra material) is one of the best. The album's ten tracks are clinical assemblages of indistinct sound, exuding a chilly, bleak Ambience. The recurrence of dysfunctional, machine-like sounds and Zeier's rigorous sense of structure give *Seismogramm* the form of a post-Industrial musique concrète. The sounds – some of them field recordings, others possibly sourced from an everyday object or even a musical instrument, all treated so as to be largely unidentifiable – are set in awkward rhythms patterns and ungainly juxtapositions, appearing and abruptly receding, or bouncing off each other as though repulsed by contact. Icy, muffled rumblings regularly appear in the background, threatening to swamp everything. The title, a giveaway metaphor from the usually inscrutable Zeier, helps to explicate the album's peculiar, elusive power, and the way its ostensibly random patterns mechanically connote elemental forces and processes. **NICK CAIN**

established, little more to be said than the same thing, over and over, with negligible variations. And yet, Turnquist has managed to express something hitherto not quite expressed on *Faint At The Loudest Hour*, on North Carolina's Vhf label.

Album opener "Amongst A Swarm Of Hummingbirds" is in some ways the most notable piece. It sets forth in a gentle, meandering weir of six string acoustics, before five minutes in, courtesy of mixman Scott Solter, the music is processed and breezed back in a flurry of luminous granules, as if electronically illustrating the track's title. Apart from the bed of silence from which the serenely agitated "Water Spots On My Mind" gradually emerges, however, there isn't very much of this sort of acoustic/electronic trickery, or investigation of the relationship between 'real' and 'unreal' sounds. Having made his point, Turnquist doesn't over-egg it. Instead, he chooses to falls back on the quality of his playing, and this is at its boldest and finest on "Mime Fight", with its almost Flamenco-tinged, thudding attack, coursing downstream over terrain uncovered by fellow fingerpickers, departing from the narrow courses set by Fahey, giving the wood and string of his instrument a rigorous ride.

DAVID STUBBS

Various
Look Directly Into The Sun
INVISIBLE CHINA CD

Martin Atkins's China Dub Soundsystem
Made In China
INVISIBLE CHINA CD

Former PiL drummer-turned-producer and label owner Martin Atkins visited Beijing in 2006 and was astonished to find a bustling, subterranean rock scene reminiscent of London and New York in the late 70s. He at once set to work on signing and recording the cream of these groups, as represented on *Look Directly Into The Sun*. It's clear that, via channels unknown, the post-punk revivalism bug has bitten bigtime in Beijing. It's equally clear that there is something about the high metabolic urgency of that particular genre which new scenes looking to create their own Year Zero instinctively grasp after.

So Snapline's "Close Your Cold Eyes" is shot through with Keith Levene-style twisted, aluminium guitar, China MC Brothers' excellent "Jaijung" is a naive but highly effective chaos of semi-rapping, funk Metal and scratch DJing. Joyside's "Dang" clatters like they're falling downstairs as they play. Demerit's "Fight Your Apathy" is more 1977, vein-popping, mic stand-throttling punk. There are relatively few attempts to add recognisably traditional Chinese materials into the mix, but Voodoo KungFu's "ChiAn", with its heavy, dirge-like riffing counterpointed with more delicate elements, is a sort of Sino-Metal concoction.

Atkins's China Dub Soundsystem saw the producer record more traditional Chinese and Tibetan musicians and singers. He then went back to his Chicago studio and marinated the results in a dub treatment. Sometimes, these ethno-dub fusions sound a bit more exciting on paper than in the ears, and certainly, there are one or two moments on this collection which make you think of Mo'Wax's duller moments. However, what more than redeems *Made In China* is its sheer percussive ferocity, particularly on "Beijing Taxi" and the heavy dub battering meted out on "Fortune Cookie".

DAVID STUBBS

Various
Music Of Nat Pwe: Folk And Pop Music Of Myanmar Vol 3
SUBLIME FREQUENCIES CD

Lovers of hectic bedlam, get satisfaction here! If you feel most music lacks that rush-hour rush, if you crave sheer density of sonic events and information overload, this medley of mad-for-it, multicoloured Myanmar magicians might do it for you. A hepped-up version of Burmese classical music, these are orchestras of gongs, tuned drums, oboes and xylophones that slash and burn their way through ceremonies (pwe) held to appease spirits (nats). The two most virtuosic instruments are pat waing, a one-man circle of 21 tuned drums, and kyi waing, an 18 gong circle. Though your ear may take a while to locate them beneath the sonic surface, a howling skirl of shawms and echo-drenched vocals that makes Scottish bagpipe ensembles look like pussies.

The opening track by male singer Sein Moota, a jerky, writhing paean to getting drunk and having fun, takes no prisoners. Aptly named female vocalist Bobadin employs echo as a weapon to do battle with what might be hundreds of flutes and oboes. Bo Hein's more pop-oriented ditty is relatively relaxed, one of a mere couple of moments when the word 'pretty' may come to mind. The other being a lullaby, though even here the singers eventually break loose and overload the tape with what can only be deliberate distortion. U Kyaw Nyunt's track is the most downright avant garde: a song about a drunken nat spirit, over a simple pulse, where the echo unit has got splashed over everything.

The South East Asian attitude to crowds, festivals and noisy racket in general is that, far from being oppressive, too much is just right, and several performances competing alongside one another simply adds to the fun. This Burmese festival music perfectly embodies this desire to be immersed in brilliant cacophony. Sun City Girls' Alan Bishop has compiled an intense and unique album.

CLIVE BELL

Various
Singles 2006–2007
SOUL JAZZ 2×CD

Compilations are Soul Jazz's stock-in-trade; they lie at the heart of its original ethos and of its identity. The label has spent its entire existence digging through the vaults to unearth, remaster, repackage and unveil countless gems for easy consumption by those less well informed, well connected, or simply with less time on their hands. Ranging from ska and roots to cosmic jazz and Tropicália, from deep funk to punk-funk, many of these releases have been nothing short of revelatory – gateways to unexplored worlds, roadmaps to buried treasure.

Increasingly, though, Soul Jazz has sought to move beyond the limits of the past and the already extant, developing ongoing relationships and commissioning new recordings. A collection of vintage ESG material led to the group's reformation under the label's aegis, and the last 18 months have seen a string of dubstep singles as Soul Jazz, a definitively London institution, plunged itself into the capital's latest underground club scene. Other signings – Capracara, Ladybug, Subway – have blossomed out of the label's impeccable enthusiasm for dance music in all its multifaceted incarnations.

The anomalous effect of which is that this set, which gathers together all the 12" releases of the last two years to offer them a second lease of life on CD, is less coherent than almost anything else they have released. Within the first three tracks, *Singles 2006–2007* has moved from the terse, heavyweight shudder of Digital Mystikz's superb "Misty Winter", through the 4/4 Acid pulsation of "Opal Rush" by Capracara to the politically charged and gleefully foul-mouthed neo-ragga clatter of Ladybug's "Dem A Bomb We".

In fact, this compilation, which must have been a challenge to sequence, demonstrates the admirable eclecticism of Soul Jazz's current network of interests almost too well. Over two CDs and more than two hours of music it certainly proves that there are plenty of vital new tracks, by Kode9, Skream, Rekid and Sutekh, amongst others, to take their place in the label's catalogue. But whether anyone who isn't a dedicated completist will want to experience them in quite this way is another question.

CHRIS SHARP

Scott Walker
And Who Shall Go To The Ball? And What Shall Go To The Ball?
4AD CD

In 2006, a creatively resurgent Scott Walker was commissioned by London's South Bank Centre to write a score for a contemporary dance piece by the company Candoco. The score, completed in spring 2007, comprises four parts and lasts 25 minutes in total. Catch this limited edition while you can – it will never be repressed.

Of the halting, staccato aspects of the score, Walker himself explains that it reflects the way we "cut up the world around us as a consequence of the shape of our bodies. How much of a body does an intelligence need to be potentially socialised in an age of ever-developing AI?" That's a rather awkwardly phrased statement in itself, whose implications aren't easy to fathom – but the music itself is eloquent and jarringly arresting enough, deliberately physical and intrusive in its composition.

Part One arises from a barely audible hum, before random jabs of chamber strings gather into a series of occasional, flurried phrases. Part Two commences with a measured, "Fee Fi Fo Fum" stomp, before an alarum of horns gives way to a Bartók-like cavalry of strings. Part Three again has the feeling of a human body invading your space rather than anything Ambient or immersive, lurching, swaying, bending and yawning. Finally, part four winds up to an almost machine-like, dervish frenzy, reminiscent, of all things, of the opening few seconds to 23 Skidoo's "Kundalini", with the listener further assailed by a volley of temple bells. *And Who Shall...* contains no vocals from










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Walker, but all of his customary gravitas and dramatic motion.

DAVID STUBBS

David Watson
Fingering An Idea

XI 2×CD

A New Zealander firmly established in New York, David Watson plays guitar and also Highland bagpipes. *Fingering An Idea* features a CD devoted to each of those instruments. In his sleevenotes, Jon Rose suggests that bagpipes are among "the most unlikely and unfashionable instruments" to find use in experimental music. He has a point. One of the few obvious precursors to Watson's bagpipery was Fluxus sound artist Yoshi Wada, who at the start of the 1980s, in composer Phill Niblock's downtown loft and elsewhere, sang along with the drone of his own variant bagpipes, built with plumbing fittings and a powerful air compressor.

Enthusiasts for contemporary drones might find it rewarding to check out traditional slow laments played by masters of the Highland pipes such as John Burgess, but Watson's skirls and sustained mournful tones have less to do with the Cairngorms than with the urbane minimalism of Niblock and La Monte Young. The unbroken continuity of sound that's intrinsic to the instrument, its unyielding volume and lively interplay of harmonics would seem to make bagpipes highly suitable for that style of music. Watson shows this to be the case, on four tracks in combination with five other pipers, on four more playing solo and multitracked. For two further pieces prerecorded material was processed and projected through multiple channels, varying the overall dynamics and discovering other overtone effects. Absorbing music.

I was expecting something comparable from the guitar disc. Watson opted instead for a series of pieces using acoustic and electric guitars to investigate tuning, various kinds of attack and the process of decay. It seems he had bell-ringing in mind. A neat contrast, but it lacks the immediate impact and obvious vitality of the piping pieces.

JULIAN COWLEY

Jozef van Wissem
Stations Of The Cross

INCUNABULUM CD

Jozef van Wissem has been slowly reinventing the lute for the last three decades. Among the slew of fast-picking, fancy-fretting guitar players so prevalent today, his lute's voice is a quiet oasis, and *Stations Of The Cross* a small masterpiece. The 14 compositions here follow the 14 stations of the cross, a ritual of observance built from the final moments in Christ's life before he was crucified. Certain tropes appear throughout. Slow mournful arpeggios are returned to again and again. When played on the slack-stringed lute, notes are left hanging solitary and isolated in their own lacunas only to be left in greater silence by the pauses van Wissem leaves between each arpeggio on tracks like "Dew Drops Fall Like Eventide", "You Can't Go Home Again" and "The Great Wheel". Occasionally higher register harmonies or fanned chords add colour, but the musical sense is one of a doleful and sombre procession.

Four tracks contain field recordings drawn from waiting rooms and station platforms. When voices can be picked out, they ask for directions or appear to be wandering lost in the impersonal purgatory of the nonplaces of modern life. These mark poignant moments of Christ's journey – his first fall ("Low Mass") and his death on the cross ("Pilgrim Talk"). They also create the most spiritual effect by enveloping events in a lost, transitory soundscape and counterpointing the human and the divine, the sacred and the profane.

NICK SOUTHGATE

Peter Wright
At Last A New Dawn

STUDENTS OF DECAY 2×CD

London resident and New Zealand native Peter Wright maps the same guitar/noise outlands that his NZ predecessors The Dead C, an acknowledged influence, first blazed through. His kit is an electric 12-string, pedals and, when recording, a laptop. He improvises a digital drone or melody fragment, then loops, layers and adds field recordings. His tools and methods are minimal, but his output is not. Since 1998, he has released 30 discs of solo material, much of it honing the same massive, blissful drift of decay and evolution.

The nine pieces on this two disc set encompass all the forms his approach can assume. There are extended drone forms, agitated textural landscapes and shorter abstract elegies. Yet Wright's touch is an organic one, and the exquisite sequencing here means the pieces coalesce into an enveloping, overwhelming flow.

Wright's music is always a delicate balance between its harrowing ascent towards climax and his cinematic ear for the audio panning shot. For the first three-quarters of the 30 minute title track, he builds an engrossing dialogue out of drifting tones, living tendrils of feedback, snippets of birdsong, and conjured organ- and string-like timbres. But it is midway through "Blue Light District" that Wright's craft is fully realised. As the chatter of radio announcers appears, one notices they are actual excerpts from the London terrorist attacks on 7 July 2006. Even at their subtle volume, they disturb the placid ambience, utterly transforming the mood and direction of the piece. Wright excels at this kind of slow poetic reveal, and succeeds in opening up intense imaginary spaces.

MATTHEW WUETHRICH

Robert Wyatt
Comicopera

DOMINO CD

"I don't think beforehand, I think afterwards. I find that plans ahead, concepts, limit you," says Robert Wyatt. Which is a little strange, given that *Comicopera*, divided as it is into three acts, feels decidedly conceptual. It ranks, however, among his finest achievements – indeed, it embraces all of the key themes of his career, ranging in mood from the amiably whimsical to the plaintively despondent, from private joy to political rage.

He's surrounded by old friends here, which could be a recipe for self-indulgence but in this case lends a warmth, a communitarian feel to Act One in particular. Annie Whitehead, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera, Paul Weller and Gilad Atzmon are among those assembled. On the Anja Garbarek "Stay Tuned" there's a candlelit, vigil-like feel, with all of the musicians breathing as one, pulling in the same direction, no one breaking away from the cuddle. "You, You, You", co-written by Wyatt's partner Alfreda Benge, is a touching paean to interdependence, a hark-back to 1974's *Rock Bottom*, with Wyatt contributing muted, amateur but eloquent phrases on a cornet.

Act Two sees a shift in mood. It's an altogether jollier affair, with tracks like "On The Town Chair" and their cheerful gait threatening to revert into "Soup Song" from *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. However, like the blazing summer of 1914, this is a misleading prelude, for next comes "A Beautiful War", with Wyatt as narrator assuming the role of the bomber. Act Three sees Wyatt refuse to sing in the English language, as a protest against the UK's involvement in the Iraq war. (This, after all, is the man who once said that his political inclination was to be a traitor.) The likes of "Del Mondo" and "Hasta Siempre Commandante" are more unravelled in their arrangements, more new jazzy in feel, reminiscent of Charlie Haden's Liberation Orchestra in their internationalist tone. Orphy Robinson's vibraphone solo on "Pastafari" is one of the section's towering moments of terrible beauty, pluming above the fray.

A superb album, in which Wyatt gathers all of his strengths, with the personal and the political, the aesthetic and the ethical are brought together as only he can.

DAVID STUBBS

Goro Yamaguchi
Shakuhachi Music: A Bell Ringing In The Empty Sky

NONESUCH EXPLORER CD

Goro Yamaguchi (1933–99) studied the shakuhachi with his father during the Second World War and quickly rose to recognition as a leading player. In 1967 he taught at Wesleyan University in Connecticut and cut a two-track LP, its title taken from a colourful pseudo-translation of the piece "Koku". Nonesuch have reissued the album as part of a gradual rerelease of their Explorer Series.

It's hard to overstate the impact of Yamaguchi's original LP in the West. One has to think back to a benighted generation when not only had no one ever heard a shakuhachi, but the idea that Japanese music might have depth and a rigour that could stand alongside European classical performance was thrillingly new and taboo-busting. *A Bell Ringing* was the first widely available recording of this music. It took its place alongside Ravi Shankar, Stockhausen and Hawkwind on the shelves of discerning record buyers, while aspiring composers marvelled at its qualities. By 1977 a portion of the recording was included on a compilation aboard the Voyager II spacecraft.

40 years on, Yamaguchi's poise is striking; he is elegant and cool to the point of chilliness. "Sokaku" ("Depicting The Cranes In Their Nest") is largely static, but highly ornamented – young cranes bickering at home. After ten minutes the piece calms and moves to the lower octave. "Koku" spends more time in this range and is generally slow and meditative. It's a warmer, more human performance.

Even at the date of its first release, a Western listener might have judged that Yamaguchi's shakuhachi style was not the only game in town. In 1967 Lyrichord issued *Japanese Masterpieces For The Shakuhachi*, an LP by anonymous monks at Kyoto temples. At the time this seemed an inferior record: unsophisticated performances, dodgy sleevenotes (musician monks are termed "tootling preachers"), and poor quality vinyl pressing. Now things look a little different. Yamaguchi represents a shiny new breed of player, both refining and formalising the old techniques so that the instrument is ready to don bow tie and tails and enter the Western concert hall. But Lyrichord's unnamed tootlers are playing on their home ground. The two monks playing "Koku" are inside the Meianji temple, and their temple bell is incorporated into the track. This music has some function in their daily life, and meaning as an activity: not a show for an audience but a spiritual exercise. Whereas Yamaguchi's music floats free in an empty sky, divorced from context. What is it for? It's for consumption, live or on record, by the new audience, according to Western models of art music.

Other recordings of these pieces exist, like Katsuya Yokoyama's excellent *The Art Of The Shakuhachi* (Ocora 1996). Yokoyama's earthy exuberance must stem from his lifelong studies with maverick Zen player Watazumi. By contrast, Yamaguchi sounds like a musician on his best behaviour, as if slightly in awe of the future status of his recording.

CLIVE BELL

Yellow Swans
At All Ends

LOAD CD

This duo, consisting of Gabriel Mindel Saloman (guitar) and Pete Swanson (electronics, vocals), deals in a particularly punishing variant of blissed-out, abstract rock. Originally formed in Portland, Oregon, later relocating to Oakland, Saloman and Swanson combine the swelling intensity of formless noise with a kind of anthemic guitar blitz. The sound they make is inescapably huge.

Yet Yellow Swans are actually far less confrontational than many of their labelmates. With its serrated guitar, static white noise blizzards and murmured, choral vocal layers, *At All Ends* creates a vivid sense of vastness to get lost in. But if its scope is widescreen, its amorphous centre and impressionistic feel keep it from drifting towards pomposity.

The introductory, funereal chimes of the titular opening track and the vertiginous, quasi-Metal climax to the closing "Endlessly Making An End Of Things" bookend three further noise explorations that touch on the outer limits but are always reined in by a sense of structure, and even melody. No space is left unfilled, but this very sense of uncontained volume and a slow, inexorable succession of breaking waves gives Yellow Swans' music its potency. "Stretch The Sands" spreads from Ambient hiss to abstract guitar scree and then dissolves in a mighty surge of oceanic noise-bliss; "Our Oases" is vast yet somehow graceful, its reverberating distortion and bass hum exploding into a kind of ecstatic blankness; "Mass Mirage" pays homage to MBV-style distortion, ascending to a plateau of relative calm before building into a tidal surge and breaking with a succession of powerful, overlapping waves of blasted noise.

TOM RIDGE

Avant Rock Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

Bachi da Pietra
Non Io
DIE SCHACHTEL CD

Bachi da Pietra are an Italian drum and guitar duo whose name when translated into English is The Stone Worms. What starts out sounding like an appreciation of Tom Waits (a style they retain throughout) quickly finds its own groove as both drummer and guitarist carve their own musical signatures into this basic template. On "Fisica Elementare" they change track by engaging in a short bout of leaden doom rock, dragging the song to the surface like an exhumed corpse, with Giovanni Succi's rough whisper of a vocal sounding like a torn prayer over his partner's funereal drum swipe. Grim and unrelenting in its attack, *Non Io* makes for uneasy yet ultimately rewarding listening.

Black Boned Angel
Eternal Love/Eternal Hunger
RIOT SEASON LP

Heavyweight doom drone group Black Boned Angel, the New Zealand based triple terror team of Campbell Kneale, James Kirk and Jules Desmond, return with what appears to be yet another sonic syringe of sludge rock. The two long tracks that make up this LP are extensions on a repeated pattern of notes, each step becoming more detailed as the piece slowly blossoms in intensity. Try to imagine a Black Metal instrumental based on the ideas of experimental composer Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*, where the harmonics of the piece are slowly broken down into raw distortion, and Black Boned Angel's crushed minimalism is suddenly elevated from the pit of despond.

Tom Carter & Robert Horton
Monsters Of Felt
PRESERVATION CD

This collaboration between Charalambides guitarist Tom Carter and homemade instrumentalist Robert Horton is a continuation of their personal quest to create a new strain of psychedelia. Over Carter's guitar constructions, Horton's found sounds and junk gamelan percussion add an element of cinematic New World surrealism to the proceedings. *Monsters Of Felt* pulsates with a life of its own, where even Carter and Horton seem to be part of something they are no longer fully in control of. At certain points comparisons with Robert Fripp and Brian Eno's *No Pussyfooting* and *Evening Star* are hard to shrug off, but Carter's Frippertronic interludes only add to the lush eccentricity of the project.

Orion Rigel Dommisse
What I Want From You Is Sweet
LANGUAGE OF STONE CD

The first release on the Drag City supported and Philadelphia based label Language Of Stone, run by Greg Weeks of Espers and Jessica Weeks of Woodwose, is the debut release from Virginia born singer/songwriter Orion Rigel Dommisse. Her songs have an Eastern European feel to them, like tales of folklore told around a flickering campfire deep in the woods with only the howl of wolves for company. There is a sharply defined dark edge to her work that belies the seemingly fragile innocence of her vocal as it wanders through the tangled thicket of piano and strings that accompany it. While the temptation to compare her to the likes of Marissa Nadler and Joanna Newsom is strong, Dommisse has more than enough black thoughts, grim tales and string arrangements of her own to keep her busy.

The Drift
Ceiling Sky
TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

The main reason to pick up this collection of vinyl-only rarities from San Francisco quartet The Drift are the two remixes from Four Tet, aka Kieran Hebden, and Xian Hawkins as Sybarite. Previously only available as a limited edition 12" single, both tweak The Drift's jazz and dub influences into new shapes, extending the group's instrumental dynamic into several different sound shapes. Four Tet's mix of "Gardening, Not Architecture" bears all his familiar trance fusion hallmarks, but Sybarite's astonishing treatment of "Invisible Cities" proves to be the real stunner. His majestic collage of reverberating riffs, Metallic fusion and kaleidoscopic dub patterns melting into diffused guitar flexing has everything but the kitchen sink stuffed inside it, with not a dead beat to be heard.

Nadja
Radiance Of Shadows
ALIEN8 RECORDINGS CD

After what seems like only weeks since their last record, Canadian duo Nadja roll yet another album onto the runway, its mighty engines droning and ready for take off. Piloted by guitarist Aidan Baker with Leah Buckareff on bass and vocals, Nadja have all the style, velocity and impact of a Stealth bomber. To label their work simply as drone, however, would be to do it a disservice, as the music is more multi-layered and complex, with slabs of guitar, bass and drum machine rising up and then falling back without warning into an abyss of strummed chords and hovering Ambience. Elsewhere Nadja's sound resembles that of a full symphony orchestra, a maelstrom of different tunings blended into a single thrust. The combination of Baker's creative vision and Buckareff's mighty bass playing arm has made Nadja one of the most exciting groups to emerge in recent years, and *Radiance Of Shadows* is one of their finest achievements.

The North Sea
On The Endless Golden Skyway
BLACK PETAL CD-R

Digitalis and Foxglove label founder Brad Rose is also responsible for The North Sea, a one man band with guest musicians that include Valerio Cosi and Jeremy Nicely on saxophone. Housed in a hand painted sleeve – actually a piece of cardboard decorated with the lid of a paint tin – *On The Endless Golden Skyway* is yet another example of the still emerging US freak folk scene. The North Sea's deliberately askew playing style is eccentric and cute, with Rose's distant vocal colliding with his zither, banjo and flute playing to create a mood of mysterious desolation. The best example is "The Sun Went Out", a genuinely spooky combination of electronic effects and acoustic instruments that summons up an eerie and claustrophobic subterranean soundscape. If only the rest of the record had followed a similar dark and winding road.

Omar Rodriguez Lopez & Lydia Lunch
Omar Rodriguez Lopez & Lydia Lunch
WILLIE ANDERSON RECORDINGS CD

Tightly backed by the adventurous group of Mars Volta member Omar Rodriguez Lopez, former No Wave supervixen Lydia Lunch's latest set of rants and raps is aimed at the heads of ugly government, fundamentalist woman-hating religion, suicide bombers and modern hypocrisy in all its many guises. The opening "Welcome To My Church" is Lunch at her most vitriolic, ripping and clawing at the stupidity of what she calls the *"God junkies"* that have torn the world apart. She goes on to suggest that we get rid of God and return to the loving arms of the Earth Goddess, all of which might sound a little too New Age, but Lunch's attack has lost none of its cobra venom or bite.

Wolves In The Throne Room
Two Hunters
SOUTHERN LORD CD

After releasing a double vinyl LP of their early CD-R releases this summer, Olympia, Washington's Black Metal horde Wolves In The Throne Room return with their debut studio album. Even though it seems that every Black Metal group nowadays is called Wolf something-or-other, this should not deter you. Amazingly, these Wolves are actually true to their name, living in a house in the woods where they grow their own food, cultivate their own livestock, observe an organic lifestyle and shun the shackles of a consumer society. *Two Hunters* is a spectacular experience that takes the essence of modern Progressive rock and fuses it with a bare-fanged Burzum-style bite that leaves its mark scarred in the memory. Hidden among songs like "Cleansing" (that features the voice of experimental vocalist Jessica Kinney) and the exceptional "I Will Lay Down My Bones Among The Rocks And The Roots" are some glorious examples of extreme rock music at its creative and artistic peak. □





MC Maguire
Meta-Conspiracy

Sonotone/24Hours/ Switzerland
Because of the strength of its' ideas, it destroys all accepted norms about Aesthetics, Beauty in Art, and other descriptions using the same old hubris...timid ears, stay away!

Squid's Ear/ Squidco USA
A massive and amazing compositional work..... studio skills are impressive- the recording benefits from a variety of aural tricks...

Whole Note Magazine Canada
...a wall of sound such as Phil Spector could only have imagined in his wildest dreams ...confrontational, extreme, and packed with drama and excitement...

Arts Journal/Post-Classic USA
resplendently recorded.. one of the most astonishing CDs I've ever heard...the most original Canadian composer since R. Murray Schafer...you'll hear tempo and collage effects you've never heard before.....

Wire Magazine UK
...achieves the kind of maddening detail which can barely be grasp even after repeated listenings... incredibly complex and elaborate musical structures.

Tzadik Records

Critical Beats Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

Fingers Inc featuring Robert Owens
I'm Strong
CLONE CLASSIC CUTS 12"

Rotterdam's Clone Records makes no bones about its fascination with the vintage sounds of Chicago and Detroit; its Classic Cuts sublabel must surely deserve some sort of UN cultural heritage funding for the way it takes lost classics and makes them available to a new audience. 20 years after its release on Larry Heard's Alleviated label, "I'm Strong" gets a Clone reissue; it sounds so far ahead of its time, you begin to wonder what, exactly, electronic music producers have been working on these past two decades. Owens – whispering, yelping, growling, cooing in an Arthur Russell-like falsetto – has never sounded more unearthly. With doubletracked vocals playing register against register and testing the limits of the gendered voice, he sounds as sinewy as woven muscles. The instrumental version serves to highlight the sci-fi weirdness of Heard's programming, as rolling toms simulate a washing machine's rumbles and thumps and a shivering, oscillating bass trill sets up an intergalactic conversation between fax machines.

Hatchback
White Diamond
THISISNOTANEXIT 12"

It doesn't get much more astrally inclined than this. On this achingly slow 'cosmic' disco track, Californian producer Hatchback largely sets aside the genre's rhythmic side, contenting himself with a plodding syn-bass and single hissing cymbal for a solid half of the eight-minute track. Instead, he focuses his attentions on a theremin-like riff that ascends over and over, soaked in echo and weirdly spry for all its quarter-note clockwork. In the song's second half, billowing chords feel like sponges soaked in pure sentimentalism strong enough to woo over even the hardest of cynics. Norway's Prins Thomas more or less lets the track run its full course before adding a ten-minute outro of mountain-spring piano riffs and limpid reverb before notching up the tempo the faintest bit and drizzling the main refrain over it like honey.

Marc Houle
Techno Vocals
MINUS 12"

The artist Ambivalent's recent release "R U OK" lived up to the musician's alias. A percolating and unsettling minimal Techno track featuring the gravelly pitched-down vocals of a man inquiring after a friend presumably teetering on the edge of a drug-induced meltdown, it was perhaps a wry commentary on the Techno world's pharmaceutical excesses, a faintly ridiculous attempt at provocative menace, or both. But Minus's latest release, from label mainstay Marc Houle, almost certainly has tongue firmly planted in cheek. Over a rubbery and economical metronomic click, a speaker asks, *"Why are the vocals pitched down so low?"* The reply: *"This is the way we make Techno."* The voice sounds like Darth Vader as heard by someone on cough syrup, an unmistakable reference to Ambivalent's demon baritone. For all its whimsy, that beat – at once itchy and goose-steppingly rigid – makes it one of the more bewitching novelty records around.

Mario Masullo & Xm
Gimme Some Truth
KALK PETS 12"

The latest release from Kalk Pets, the singles-driven, dance-oriented sublabel of Karaoke Kalk, may well be its best: it's surely their most invigorating example of surefire physical impulse fused with the electroacoustic detailing that distinguishes much of Karaoke Kalk's output. Italians Mario Masullo, co-founder of the Defrag label, and XM, or Maurizio Martusciello, deftly balance digital grit, classic analogue-inspired synthesis and sparkling electric guitar. All three tracks have an irresistible sense of groove and a sort of hypersense sound design that can only be described as psychedelic (in the best sense), with plucked notes ratcheting down into ever finer morsels and wet, webfooted basslines sending ripples across glistening surfaces. Best of all, all three cuts straddle the line between song and track, neatly folding economical musical statements inside Techno's infinite sprawl, and vice versa.

Shit Robot
Chasm
DFA 12"

Some 18 months after his debut single for DFA, Ireland's Marcus Lambkin returns with two more tracks of arcing, aching Techno. Making no bones about its debt to Carl Craig's style of great, buzzsaw arpeggios, lovingly filtered in real time, "Chasm" is all searchlights and spangles, a syncopated one-note riff providing the blackened ground against which drainpipe riffing, yearning chord washes and an explosive disco break flare up like magnesium. There's no other word for it than 'epic'. On the flipside, "Lonely Planet" is more easygoing, given its straightahead hi-hats and reassuring, sunny-day counterpoints; the lead hangs tantalizingly on the major third before skimming the fifth with its fingertips and slumping with relief back home. Put this way, a lonely planet doesn't seem so bad at all.

Sutekh
Elephant And Obelisk
ORAC 12"

After far too long outside the underground Techno limelight – he released some 20 records between 1998 and 2002, but then only five since then – San Francisco's Sutekh returned in grand form at last year's Mutek festival, drawing on electro and classic funk for a set of inspired unpredictability, right-angle turns and no small measure of wry humour. His second record this year, and first for Seattle's Orac label, splits the difference between the familiar menace of Acid and a clownfooted approach to 4/4 funk: swinging heavily, lingering on chirping bleeps and letting his filters run as ragged as torn sailcloth. The insistent "Unstern" is the most straightforward thing here, but even then it's an exercise in mischievous dissonance and stork-legged dance moves. "Zuur" keeps the machine beat steady while a filtered Acid bassline ties itself in pretzel knots. The closing "Ubu Rex" is a swooping jet-car ride over a potholed dubstep rhythm; there are echoes of Deadbeat's synthed-out 21st century dub, but Sutekh's approach to gnarled textures and self-immolating sound design is all his own.

Tolcha vs Soom
Send Dem Kids To War
META POLYP 12"

Al-Haca collaborators Tolcha, Berliners, hailing from the bass-obsessed Meta Polyp family, are part of a global movement determined to shake a polyglot sense of promise out of 'urban' music by applying steadily increasing subwoofer pressure. "Void" channels splintered-wood glitches into a rippling dancehall pattern flecked with hand drums and Asian-influenced strings; MC Soom T sticks to the low end of her range, weaving menacingly in and out of the tuned drums. It's not radically different from Timbaland and Missy Elliott's work from a few years back, but as club music goes, it still comes as a minor revelation. The ragga-meets-electro House bounce of "What About Us" might be harder going depending upon your tolerance for its burnished, doubletracked vocal hook. Far better, the doubletime "Send Dem Kids To War" could be the only dancehall track that might feasibly find its way into a Justice set. Jahcoozi, Eva Be and Al-Haca all offer remixes, of which the latter is the standout: uncomfortably balancing woozy triplets and a swung Schaffel House rhythm, it sounds almost like one of Thomas Brinkmann's classic double tonearm variations.

Uusitalo
Korpikansa EP
HUUME MP3

In the past two years, Sasu Ripatti has released one new album and two 12"s as Luomo, come up with a new Vladislav Delay longplayer and reissued that project's Chain Reaction classic, *Multila*, and released still more material under his Uusitalo alias with another full-length on the way. This EP offers four "club edits" of cuts from that record, finding Ripatti more stripped-down than ever. While familiar Ripatti tropes tend to bleed across albums – bulbous, dubby basslines, whooshing sound design, distant vocal samples – these four tracks find their identity in a newfound appreciation of dancefloor demands. Basslines are stubbier, hi-hats hiss with the menacing ring of sharpening cutlery, and even the omnipresent chords sound not downy but unusually staccato and ragged. The growling "Nälkälaulu", propelled forward by double-time toms, recalls The Human League's "Seconds", while the stop-start rhythms of "Karhunainen" – a masterpiece of hyperspace orienteering – show Ripatti at his most kinetic. □

Dub Reviewed by Steve Barker

Dennis Alcapone
Forever Version (Deluxe Edition)
HEARTBEAT CD

In 1971, the time of *Forever Version*'s first release, Jamaica's number one deejay ruler was Daddy U Roy with versions galore of Duke Reid's Treasure Isle rocksteady hits. Dennis Alcapone had skilled up his DJ persona courtesy of the El Paso sound system, which provided the title of his first single, "El Paso", voiced for Clement Dodd at Studio One using Jackie Mittoo's instrumental "Wire Higher". Although there were stylistic overlaps with earlier deejays, Alcapone developed his own idiosyncratic vocal trademark whoops and "yeah, yeah, yeah"s. Out of all his output, including productions from Lee Perry, Keith Hudson, Joe Gibbs and Bunny Lee amongst many others, these Studio One sides remain the work by which he is most fondly remembered. 12 cuts from the original set are enhanced with the addition of six bonus tracks, most notably the epic nine minute mix of Carlton & The Shoes' yearning "Love Me Forever", where the vocal is followed by a fluent and restrained wah-wah guitar before Alcapone enters at the six minute mark, assuming the Cupid role with a toast reinforcing the lyrical entreaties of the song. Delroy Wilson's "Trying To Conquer Me" assumes a much darker tone, with a growling intro and Alcapone punctuating the moody vocal in an Old School style that sadly was soon to evaporate. Another of those essential top ten deejay albums that still resonates, if only for providing a rich vein of samples.

The Bug featuring Warrior Queen
Poison Dart/Remixes
NINJA TUNE CD/12"

The assassin bug is a predatory insect that injects poison designed to dissolve its prey into juices to be sucked up as nutrient. And so Kevin Martin launches the stuttering lurch of a rhythm probe that is "Poison Dart" with a globalised mission to soak up the best of what the Miami's South Rakkas Crew, Vienna's Stereotyp, London's Skream and Tokyo's Baku have to offer. Not surprisingly, the South Rakkas Crew step up the pace and revisit the scene of their criminal "Clappas" riddim, while Skream can't resist remaking a track into an identi-dubstep. But Baku comes out on top, dragging in Flowdan's chat on the rhythm "Stampin" for a clashed-up megamix, and Stereotyp who sweetens up Warrior Queen's vocals while increasing the weight of the bass to stomach churning levels.

Culture
Two Sevens Clash (30th Anniversary Edition)
SHANACHIE CD

Something of a lost opportunity. If you are going to design a reissue into book format and saddle it with a title that stokes up expectations, then the goods must be delivered. The original *Two Sevens Clash* is probably Culture's best known release, and it can be found lying around in the record collection of many an ageing punk. What's missing here is a decent remaster. Also absent is 'Informer' Joe Hill's DJ version of "See Them A Come" and, unforgivably, there's no "Prophesy Reveal", the apocalyptic DJ version of "Two Sevens Clash" by DJ Bojangles. On the plus side, there's a 12" of "See Dem A Come" with DJ Prince Weedy and two I Roy versions within extended mixes, "Natty Dread Taking Over" and "I'm Not Ashamed", and also included is the dub version to the latter, which finds Errol Thompson in top form with a mix that ranks amongst his best and most inventive, as ghostly string sections hang around the dub like a sonic mist.

Mikey Dread
World War III
DREAD AT THE CONTROLS CD

This 1981 album is reissued as part of Mikey Dread's collaboration with Ernie B, the West Coast's main reggae retailer and distributor and is, incredibly, the last full album production from the DJ and engineer who did so much to help the sound of reggae and dub 'cross over' in the late 70s and early 80s. Consisting of a mix of dancehall tunes with singer and DJ in combination style, dubs, DJ chats and extended discomixes, the original tracklist has six of the album or contemporary dubs added as bonus to distinguish the release from earlier 'bootlegs'. The Roots Radics are in strict charge of the 'walk and skank rhythms' and singers Ed Fitzroy, Earl 16 and the rich baritone of Congoman Watty Burnett on vocal duties. As might be expected, there are tape rewinds, female vocal intros and surprises in the mix throughout the set, which is mixed and dubbed out by Scientist and Michael 'Mikey Dread' Campbell himself. Highlights are "The Jumping Master", which has every trick Dread ever pulled crammed into its five minutes, the shift phasing of the nyahbinghi dub break on "Israel (12 Tribe) Stylee" and "Mental Slavery" that maintains an off-key guitar downstroke throughout the mix.

International Observer
Heard
DUBMISSION CD

It's some six years since the release of *Seen*, the debut album from former Thompson Twin Tom Bailey, exiled in Aotearoa/New Zealand as The International Observer. In that time he has continued to search for a perfected dubwise electronica, in common with a growing cadre of likeminded global dubheads. New Zealand's musical climate nourishes dubwise exploration, as evidenced by the disproportionate number of reggae acts to emerge from there over the years. In common with Fat Freddy's Drop, Skinny Jim, Katchafire and the newer waves of roots, International Observer's well crafted, hazy dub is squeezed out smooth, with not much reality intrusion other than the waves lapping on the shore through the first few tracks – plenty of melodica and sampled horns in evidence. The ganja clouds part with "At The Coronation", which samples Young Tiger's calypso reportage of 1953, and "Cellphone Dub" holds a horn line reminiscent of a truncated version of Johnny Clarke's "None Shall Escape The Judgement" rhythm. But perhaps it's time for Bailey to start working with some real live vocalists and DJs to avoid drifting off into those great shopping malls and corporate reception areas that have become the home of today's Ambient music.

Echo Ranks/Jah Marnyah
Technology Pts I & II/Versions
DEEP ROOT 10"

An international dub axis comes together for this new 10" piece, produced by Zion Train's Neil Perch out of his Cologne studio. On vocal duties is Echo Ranks, a Leicester based singer and deejay who goes out with both the city's Vibronics crew and Leeds's Iration Steppers. On the singjay version is Montserrat's Jah Marnyah, also based in Leicester; on bass is Iñaki Yarritu of BDF (Basque Dub Foundation), London based but originally from the Basque Country. Dubbing it all up is Italian Simone Lombardi aka Dub Terror, who has been developing his skills around the nu roots circuit for the past few years. Here, he demonstrates himself to be one of the leading engineers on the scene – especially with the bleak groan of the dubstep version he conjures from the half-step reggae rhythm, and on the melodica dub he uses subtlety and restraint rather than bags full of echo, reverb and FX. As for the seemingly Luddite message of the song, just as we are being told that technology is the answer by the likes of Bush, perhaps contrarian views require exploration.

Bim Sherman
Tribulation (Down In Jamdown 1974–79)
PRESSURE SOUNDS CD/2×LP

A few years ago, a comprehensive reissue programme of Bim Sherman's back catalogue was halted by the demise of German distributor EFA, so it's good news that Sherman's old friend from On-U Sound days, Pete Holdsworth of Pressure Sounds, is arranging this excellent collection sourced from the singer's own Jamaican labels, Scorpio, Sun Dew and Red Sea. Opening the set is "Ital West", an early version of a tune Sherman was later to rerecord as "World Of Dispensation". A crisp Tubby's dub with pumping horn section, "Love Forever", continues in the same style, and is followed by a Jah Woosh DJ take on "Love In The Ghetto" plus its dubwise version. The vocal and dub versions of "Tribulation" and "My Whole World" that prefaced this set as 7" releases are, in fact, remixed alternate versions from the takes on the album, as if to verify Sherman's tendency – as was common for Jamaican artists as a matter of economics rather than creative choice – of recycling proven tunes or rhythms as different songs or versions for new labels or later times. □



Electronica Reviewed by Chris Sharp



A_dontigny
Geisteswissenschaften
NO TYPE CD

As you might guess from the quotation from Guy Debord's *La Société du Spectacle* which proudly adorns the sleeve of *Geisteswissenschaften*, Aimé Dontigny revels in a refusenik sensibility. A founder member of free noise collective Napalm Jazz and a dedicated servant of the Canadian New Music Network, his first fully fledged solo CD defies easy assimilation. These constructions take standard tropes such as hiphop drum breaks, saccharine sax solos and swooning romantic film scores, and disfigure them with flurries of disruptive sound. But as the violence is generally held in check, the end results are curiously ambivalent; sometimes it's hard to work out whether you're being offered the farthest reaches of sound art or just a particularly cerebral dose of triphop. Somehow Dontigny manages to conjure a strange, splenetic grace from his unruly source material and *Geisteswissenschaften* remains an intriguing if frequently bemusing listen throughout.

Arp
In Light
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND CD

On first acquaintance, it seems that this is intent on recreating the sound of mid-70s West Germany. A San Francisco resident of French-Greek extraction and a member of experimental improvising groups Tussle and The Alps, Arp is music of an altogether less frenetic kind. The influence of Cluster, Harmonia and early Kraftwerk runs throughout *In Light*, from the benign analogue burbles of the opening "St Tropez" to the kosmische shimmer of the long-held chords on "Potentialities II". Slowly but surely, though, other influences are brought to bear, although mostly of a similar vintage. "Odyssey (For Bas Jan Ader)" calls to mind the massed and monolithic repetitions of Terry Riley's *Persian Surgery Dervishes*, while "Fireflies On The Water" has the radiophonic texture and quirky melody of Eno's *Another Green World*.

Aun
Blackhorse
ORAL CD
Whitehorse
ORAL CD

Martin Dumais is a mainstay of the Canadian electronica movement. His Hautec label has been a conduit for producers such as Akufen and Deadbeat, and his contributions to art exhibitions and television programmes have provided a constant transmission of rich, abstract sound. These two CDs, released separately but amounting to a single body of work, are the sound of Dumais in isolation, free of the weight of a commission or outside influence, and they demonstrate a penchant for cavernous Ambient soundscapes and tiny, sepulchral whispers. There's nearly two hours of music here, but it can be experienced as one vast gaseous drift. Stately melodies unfurl in slow motion; in the distance, air moves, rustling through autumnal leaves.

Ryu Hankil/Jin Sangtae/ Taku Unami/Mattin
5 Modules III
MANUAL CD

The Manual microlabel was founded in Seoul last year by Ryu Hankil, and its inaugural releases have been a series of five "modules", of which this is the third. The four artists involved in this instalment use laptops, radios and contact microphones to improvise a 55 minute long piece. The results are surprising, even shocking, in their singleminded intensity. For much of the first half, Hankil and his cohorts explore the dramatic power of silence: there are longueurs of several minutes during which literally nothing happens, but tension nonetheless builds, to be ratcheted up another notch by the sudden arhythmic incursion of stark and contorted electronic stabs. During the fifth part, a crescendo of white noise envelops the listener, and although the experience is violent, it's mingled with a sense of relief. But nothing is straightforward here, and fraught silence and tortured noise act out a maddening, quixotic dance as the four improvisors pursue their schema with clinical, almost surgical intent.

Jean-Michel
The Audience Is Missing
ONPA))))) CD

By taking one of the most famous/infamous names in the history of electronic music as his own, this Münster based producer is certainly making something of a statement. Jean-Michel has spent much of the six year hiatus since his last album, 2001's *New Medium Softpack*, creating ringtones and devising channel idents for the German music TV station Viva, and *The Audience Is Missing* reveals the slick production skills and tiny, glittering touches of a man used to working in commercial miniature. An ostensibly straightforward uptempo romp like "RTFM" is stealthily undermined by the distant crunch of breaking crockery; the benign chimes of "Laniyard" are unsettled by furiously scrubbed guitars which hover in the background. If the anodyne drift of "Carrer De L'Aurora" suggests that Jean-Michel's hommage to Jarre is only partly ironic, the motorik distortion of "Emo-fy Me, Baby!" reveals a redeeming interest in the altogether more abrasive legacies of My Bloody Valentine and Hüsker Dü.

Opitope
Hau
SPEKK CD

Chihei Hatakeyama's fragile and luminous debut album *Minima Moralia* was released last year; now it's the turn of his collaborative project with Date Tomoyishi to break cover. Opitope complements rather than contrasts with Hatakeyama's solo work: it conjures a similarly hesitant, softly spun sense of beauty from plucked strings and gently spangling digitalia, but beneath these beguiling incidents lies a surprisingly rigorous schematic framework. *Hau* is an imaginary travelogue, describing a journey from North to South and at the same time offering a meditation on the changing seasons. Eliding and reconciling the individual tracks is an overarching suggestion of circularity: the tinkling, watercolour piano chords which close the album reprise the soundworld of the opening. A perceptible but incredibly gradual sense of development emerges, as the cool tones of "Trees Reflecting On The Surface Of The Lake" evolve tentatively towards the radiant guitars of "Mist On The Sea".

Saralunden & Andrey Kiritchenko
There Was No End
NEXSOUND CD

This collaborative project has its roots in a Swedish Institute initiative which took place in spring 2006. With the aim of promoting relations between Sweden and Ukraine, four musicians from each country were asked to work together. There's a curious sense of dislocated tension in these songs which could be derived from their unorthodox genesis, couching Lunden's faux naif, singsong delivery against Kiritchenko's uneasily shifting electronic backcloth. Titles such as "Come With Me" and "Oh So Blue" are knowingly banal and the lyrics offer a similarly deadpan version of the utterly conventional. But they are transformed by the slurred handclaps, queasily manipulated vocals and restlessly uncertain tempos. The overall impression is of a compromised emotional landscape not a million miles away from Throbbing Gristle's *20 Jazz Funk Greats*, and the closing, half whispered phrase – *"Tonight you gave me something I will always remember"* – hangs in the mind after silence has closed over it, resonant and ambiguous.

Xylitol
Functionary
PIEROGI CD

For any Londoner with even the most passing interest in the more exotic reaches of electronica and out pop/rock, Jim Backhouse has been a vital presence as a live and radio DJ for over a decade. While his music on *Functionary* is most easily characterised as the product of an immaculate record collection, it is nevertheless brilliant fun. He creates a kind of cartoon Neue Deutsche Welle, splices it with early Cabaret Voltaire horror-vocals, squiggly Planet Mu synth burps and the aged rinky-dink melodies of *Radioactivity*-period Kraftwerk. But there's much more in there too – a top-notch library music pastiche on "Cultus Pyrex", some mournful synth elegies in the style of The Human League circa *The Dignity Of Labour*, and even a tentative stab at Pierre Henry-style musique concrète on "Delaware". Backhouse has a great ear for stylistic minutiae, but now he's proved he can cut and paste his favourite musics in and out of each other at will, one feels it's time he got down to some serious work. **KEITH MOLINÉ**

Global Reviewed by Richard Henderson

Bob Brozman
Lumière
RIVERBOAT CD

Island music maven Bob Brozman has combined a yen for travel with his dexterity as a slide guitarist to good effect over the course of two decades' worth of a career that resists easy categorisation. In the course of *Lumière*'s running time, a musician renowned for his strength as a collaborator overdubs himself into a one-man studio orchestra. More than facile, self-congratulatory sleight of hand, Brozman has crafted an intensely personal statement, as well as a scrapbook of his lifetime's wanderings and maybe the last word in calling cards. Beginning with an ecumenical deconstruction of tango, the virtually multiplied guitarist builds improbably likeable compositions that bear the scents of his travels, yet refute the constraints of a codified form, be it Hindustani raga or Hawaiian slack key. Even on those tracks which appear to specifically namecheck past collaborations, as "N'Oubliez Pas La Réunion" would appear to commemorate Brozman's duets with Rene Lacaille, the coda will effortlessly morph into something from the other side of the Indian Ocean, perhaps from a Bollywood film score of the guitarist's imagining. Most works of unstoppable ambition feel slight compulsion to endear themselves; one feels no compunction in inviting both *Lumière* and author to take up indefinite residence in the living room.

Colombiafrica The Mystic Orchestra
Voodoo Love Inna Champeta Land
RIVERBOAT CD

It's amazing how the passage of time can level the playing field. Fans of older Congolese rumba-rock stars such as Nyboma or Bopol Masimiana might have disdained the arpeggios of latterday guitarist Diblo Dibala as being rushed and soulless; the lot of them, including Congo stalwarts Dially Kimoko and Rigo Star (that's right, the famous one), interlock vocals and guitars in a summation of all that was and is great about music spawned in Kinshasa. This, in support of a supergroup of vocalists from Colombia's Caribbean coastline, assembled under the Colombiafrica moniker; inverting the mission statement defining Ibrahim Sylla's Africando project, where African vocalists meet the Harlem salseros they had long idolised, on *Voodoo Love*... the influences and airline passage carom in a different direction. But the Congo isn't the only rhythmic template deployed here: Colombia's own cumbia beats turn up, as does the four-on-the-floor metre of Soweto's mbaqanga. Some curious interludes are wedged between great songs, the former sounding like samples from the Nortec collective run briefly amok. These superficial nods to postmodernism are few and easily ignored, fortunately, the better to concentrate on the latest (and sweetest) fruits of endless symbiosis between Africa and the New World.

Habib Koité & Bamada
Afriki
CUMBANCHA CD

Like the late Ali Farka Touré before him, Koité draws strength from the blues, whose roots ultimately circle back to Mali. "Fimani" offers the evidence, with mouth harp wailing over malleted balafon and acoustic guitar fingering that mimics Malian kora harp. Koité resists the preservationist mantle, occasionally veering into territory normally occupied by the likes of Gilberto Gil. His rhythm section will accent second and fourth beats in Jamaican style, or the arrangement of "N'Teri" will accommodate backing from strings and chorus. Overall, *Afriki* feels more than a little mannered, with a deep veneer of studio polish and restraint, unlike Koité and Bamada's recent, less inhibited live set, *Fôly!*. Still, there is much to admire here, as when kit drums mesh with Malian percussion beneath vocal call-and-response during "Massaké". Or when the oily timbre of the n'goni spike fiddle pirouettes above the ambling meter of "Barra", its lyrics exhorting Koité's countrymen to work for change as its music anchors itself near the Sahara's sands.

Puerto Plata
Mujer De Cabaret
IASO CD

An engaging set that caps the career of 85 year old Plata, a master of the Dominican Republic's take on the Afro-Cuban son form. Dominican son, driven underground during the years of the Trujillo dictatorship, has much in common with the six-string traditions of Puerto Rican jibaro music, and adds the skipping beat of Dominican bachata to the gentility implicit in son. This disc, a companionable blend of vocals gruff and sweet, acoustic guitars and hand percussion, is split between the output of two sessions, each respectively featuring different lead guitarists, Frank Mendez and Edilio Paredes; Plata's interplay with both brings to mind the deceptively casual weave of fingerpicking common in duets between Hawaii's Gabby Pahinui and Atta Isaacs. That Plata and Co can still offer such unselfconsciously sunny tunes is a marvel, given that their rootsy sound has been deemed, down the years, either deeply uncool or criminally counter-revolutionary.

Various
Dong Folk Songs
WESTERN CHINA CULTURAL ECOLOGY RESEARCH WORKSHOP CD+DVD

Another sumptuously packaged survey of Chinese village music supervised by Ken Smith and Joanna C Lee, *Dong Folk Songs* immerses the listener in traditions that survive outside the mainstream of Chinese culture. The first half-dozen or so selections contain a cappella singing, with each track revealing its quixotic structure in achingly slow motion. The brief "Trees Cannot Bar Us" is framed with natural slap-back echo that imbues the male vocalists with the protean force of 50s-era rockers. Women sing parallel melody lines, with carefully gauged microtonality governing the intervals within their harmonies. Muscular drones tail out from each stanza of "If We Don't Sing, Youth Will Pass Us Like A River". (Smith's booklet notes point up the similarities between the latter and Western medieval organum.) The continued existence of Dong music in its natural, unselfconscious state is currently threatened by government-sanctioned, 'professional' renditions. The charm of this extraordinary document is, as such, shadowed by quiet notes of alarm.

Various
Molam: Thai Country Groove From Isan Vol 2
SUBLIME FREQUENCIES CD

As with most titles issued by the renegade musicologists at Sublime Frequencies, the second iteration of *Molam* comes equipped with radiophonic fog, Brechtian dislocation, dada whimsy and naked ferocity animating every track. Musical nonsequiturs abound throughout these hopped-up 'grooves' from northern Thailand: electronic glissandi, perhaps the sound of a comet's tail, slams into machine gun fire, in turn dissolving into a midtempo vamp possibly swiped from a very warped Stax LP (and all of it within "Plob Jai Nale-Nar"). The combination of khaen mouth-organ and electric organ is potent and transfixing; as is many singers' use of stage cabinets in the studio, guaranteeing a truly mythic ambience. More's the pity that hiphop and Western-style pop are steamrolling molam into extinction, as the alloy of wah-wah guitar and village percussion traffics funk like nothing this side of Detroit's Woodward Avenue. Here's music that's raucous and impassioned and nakedly fun from stem to stern.

Various
The Roots Of Chicha: Psychedelic Cumbias From Peru
BARBÈS CD

The wooly and wildly anti-formalist chicha appeared briefly during a spate of petrochemical prosperity in late 60s Peru. While they never became truly popular, chicha groups materialized on the edge of the Amazon, with a collectively altered mindset that allowed for the appropriation of wonderfully incongruous elements. Los Mirios and Los Hijos Del Sol were steeped in Peru's native guitar traditions, which represented little beyond a jumping-off point. These groups suddenly had access to wah-wah pedals, rudimentary synthesizers and, most importantly, amplification. The reverb-splashed palette of Dick Dale and Hank B Marvin held vast appeal. Even that staple melody of Universal Studio horror films, Beethoven's *Für Elise* – "Para Elisa" in Los Destellos' hands – is revivified by nimble electric guitar picking and shuffle rhythms borrowed from Colombian cumbia. Much about *The Roots Of Chicha* confounds and intrigues. How did this stuff get away? And why didn't even local art students pick up on it? All the more credit to the enquiring minds of Barbès, for rooting out these weird and wonderful sounds. □



Lost Style Ge Gan-ru
NA 134 0-22551-01342-
Frank Su-Huang, cello;
Margaret Leng Tan, toy orchestra and voice;
Shanghai String Quartet
Three pieces demonstrating the extraordinary compositional voice of Ge Gan-ru (b.1954). His life journey is now a somewhat familiar story of the generation of Chinese artists in the late twentieth century... of a childhood in music, of being sent to forced labor camp as a teenager, of being a professor under the communist regime, of getting away to New York and establishing a life there.



Turner Roberto Sierra
NA135 0-22551-01352-0
Continuum–flute, clarinet, piano, cello, violin, soprano
A collection of Sierra's modern classical chamber work performed by New York's Continuum, with repertoire ranging from directly lyrical to extraordinarily dense and expressionistic.



Nor'easter Slow Six
NA136 0-22551-01362-9
Violin, viola, cello, guitars, baritone guitar, rhodes, software, computers
The intimacy of strings and piano combine with rock and roll's electric guitars and fender rhodes within a storm of interactive computer textures to create a unique and powerful listening event.

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Hiphop Reviewed by Dave Stelfox

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at5

angharad davies / tisha mukarji



at4

hum
rhodri davies / matt davis
samantha rebello / bechir saade



at3

music for shakuhachi
frank denyer
played by yoshikazu iwamoto



at2

tasting
sophie agnel/
phil minton



at1

tempetuous
the contest of pleasures
john butcher / xavier charles
axel dorner

at

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Chuck Brown & DJ Kool
Block Party
RAW VENTURE MP3

For the most part, hiphop is at its most vital when it's on home soil. From Bay Area hyphy to New Orleans Bounce and Georgia crunk, many states have built up grassroots movements loyally supported by local fans. However, just as nearby Baltimore, Maryland's Club music culture exists several points removed from traditional regional rap idioms, Washington DC has for many years ploughed its own furrow with a bottom-heavy take on live big band funk known as GoGo. Despite several attempts, this music has made scant impact on wider pop culture, with groups such as the Junkyard Band, Rare Essence and Troublefunk achieving recognition only from the most dedicated sample spotters. Here, GoGo pioneer Chuck Brown teams up with DJ Kool – who achieved the genre's biggest break into the mainstream with 1996's "Let Me Clear My Throat" – and delivers a track that pretty much defines the word 'fun'. It's simple stuff, but this innocent straightforwardness is where the charm of "Block Party" lies. Instead of yelling at strippers, a good night out for these two old-timers involves inviting their buddies over to dance around the barbecue. It's the kind of offer you'd be foolish to pass up.

Foxy Brown featuring Barrington Levy
Mr DJ
KOCH MP3

The Game's "It's Okay (One Blood)" has opened the floodgates for a torrent of dancehall/rap combinations. However, this situation does beg one question: how many more times do we need to hear the yodelling chorus from Barrington Levy's "Here I Come" reworked for the crossover market? Probably quite a few, considering it's one of only three reggae records hiphop producers are willing to sample. To be fair, this track never makes any claims of reinventing the wheel. Instead Foxy Brown puts on a typically expletive-laden show over a set of chunky Island-inspired beats reminiscent of Lil Kim's "Put Your Lighters Up" – and that's not such a bad thing at all.

Chamillionaire
Ultimate Victory
UNIVERSAL CD

Despite scoring Houston hiphop's biggest breakthrough so far, Hakeem Seraki, aka Chamillionaire, has consistently distanced himself from the rest of the Lone Star state. So it's absolutely fitting that "Ridin'" – perhaps the least typical example of Texan rap yet – should have brought this complex and belligerent MC international recognition. Thanks to heavily publicised disputes with Mike Jones, former partner Paul Wall and Screwed Up Click member Z-Ro, the persecution complex that drove his debut album *The Sound Of Revenge* could be equally seen as justified or his own fault. Forget about the backstory, though, and it's clear that he remains a truly innovative MC, and *Ultimate Victory* is stronger than its predecessor for one reason. While he's happiest tearing chunks out of inferior technicians and less successful businessmen, the sense that *"haters"* lurk around every corner has dissipated, allowing Chamillionare to be himself at last. With cameos from Lil Wayne, Bun B and even Slick Rick on "Hip Hop Police", it's still unclear whether he's insider or outsider, social commentator or free market narcissist. Then again, the ability to change lyrical colours at the flip of a coin has always been his most exciting attribute.

Hurricane Chris
Hand Clap
J MP3

According to a cursory Google search, it emerges that many believe this one song heralds the total destruction of hiphop culture. For that reason alone, it's worth checking out. Still, a more level-headed commentator would just settle for saying that it's probably the most irritating club jam of the summer. Following the hair-tearingly exasperating "Ay Bay Bay", Shreveport, Louisiana producer Phunk Dawg turns in a similarly snap-flavoured beat. Totally devoid of swing, its ricocheting kickdrums and niggling synth stabs form the backdrop over which young gun Hurricane Chris whips up a nasally inflected ice storm of diamond chains, jewel-encrusted bezels, nursery rhyme snippets and Elvis impersonations. It's not smart and, even after repeated plays, appears to be about absolutely nothing whatsoever. What sets it apart from run-of-the-mill Dirty South crossover efforts, though, are the titular handclaps. Triple-timing into the chorus, these concussive, upside-the-head slaps are less reminiscent of crunk's metallic percussion than the scratchy counterpoints of the 'jack' sound of early House or Dutch Gabba circa 1997.

Scarface
Never
ASYLUM/RAP-A-LOT MP3

These days Scarface only has has to show up at a studio and the result is, more or less, guaranteed to be lauded as the work of a genius. Blessed with one of the most individual and bitingly precise flows in the South, not to mention an illustrious history as one of the founding fathers of Southern hiphop, there's no doubt that the former Geto Boy deserves a whole heap of props. The only problem with such diehard love is that the less people are willing to question an artist's wisdom, the more scope is left for flabbiness and self-indulgence. Despite a beautifully crafted beat by Drummer Boy and NO Joe, "Never" remains a tough song to like, its subject matter – the usual *"no snitchin'"* story – neither inspirational nor illustrative of anything we haven't heard a thousand times before.

Keak Da Sneak
In Front Of Yo Mom's House
ALLNDADOE/KOCH MP3

Inventor of the word 'hyphy', Farm Boy and proud owner of the gravelliest voice in hiphop, Keak Da Sneak has been one of the Bay Area's worst kept secrets of past years. Now, as the spotlight has finally turned to the region, he seems to have bucked the local industry's tendency toward independent recording and publishing contracts so convoluted as to make national signings almost impossible, and is poised for the release of new album *Deified*. "In Front Of Yo Mom's House" may seem an unlikely single, eschewing the chromey, rave-style synths and the ecstasy-driven kick drums of Northern California's signature sound and harking back to the earlier West Coast heyday of G-Funk. It's a smart move, though, also recalling highlights of his own *Sneakacydal* album and various moments from the career of late scene godfather Mac Dre.

Three 6 Mafia
Like Money
HYPCOLOMBIA MP3

"Said I look/I feel/I smell like money..." Without wanting to split hairs, that's not really possible, is it? Still, the past couple of years have marked a golden period for Memphis, Tennessee's Three 6 Mafia. Previously accused of being hick-town Satanists and relegated to playing second fiddle to the Atlanta scene (despite having done an equal amount to establish crunk as an internationally recognised sound), DJ Paul and Juicy J finally saw the karmic balance redressed with 2005's Academy Award for their contribution to the soundtrack of *Hustle & Flow*. Unfortunately it now appears that they've run out of things to say. While the duo's production is as strong as ever, splicing stuttering interpolations of the Isley Brothers' "Summer Breeze" with rapid-fire drum kicks and firecracking snares, this preview of their forthcoming album disappoints by fixing its attention on trite and testing tropes of cash and cars, paying scant attention to wordplay or imagery. As a result, it's a long way from the apocalyptic, occult panoramas of *Mystic Stylez* and barely touches on the greatness they are capable of.

K-Rino, mixed by Triksta & Late
A Lyrical Legend
WOLFTOWN CD

Most histories of Texan rap tend to concentrate on The Geto Boys and the late, great DJ Screw's syrupy, time-stretched remixing style. One frequently neglected figure who belongs to the roll call of artists pivotal to the state's place at the centre of Southern hiphop is K-Rino. A Black Muslim leader of the South Park Coalition of MCs and producers, founder member of the Houston scene and the first artist from the city to ever release a 12" single, he boasts quite the resume. In a somewhat strange, but thus far fruitful, alliance, Late and Triksta of Wolverhampton's Wolftown Records now head up the SPC's UK branch, celebrating their admission to the collective with K-Rino's first ever British mixtape. Combining previously released material with custom-made spoken word interludes and original tracks, it's a slick affair that will hopefully win this underrated MC a whole new audience. □

Jazz & Improv Reviewed by David Keenan

Arthur Doyle Electroacoustic Ensemble
Bushman Yoga
RUBY RED CD-R

The Arthur Doyle Electroacoustic Ensemble always sounded real good on paper. Hooking up feral saxophonist/vocalist Arthur Doyle with a bunch of young free noise improvisors should serve to highlight and expand upon Doyle's almost complete break with jazz language, while simultaneously joining the dots between his early groundbreaking approach to the shackles of form and the revolutionary praxis of current future primitives. But somehow the recorded evidence never really matched the accompanying mental scenario that the whole scheme seemed to imply. *Bushman Yoga*, however, is the perfect ticket. Here the core of the ensemble is slimmed down to the trio of Doyle on saxophone and vocals, drummer Ed Wilcox (of Temple Of Bon Matin) doubling up on harmonica and "mouth noises" and Jay Reeve on electronics. For each of the two live shows documented here they are joined by a local guest, with Bryan Martin playing flute and snare in Birmingham, Alabama (Doyle's birthplace) and James Harrar On playing winds, xylophone and kora in Atlanta. The small ensemble approach suits Doyle's current hyper-concise style, as he obsesses over perfectly formed melodic instants that are comparable to Moondog in their execution through African love calls, harmonica and scat-singing duets and some wild sound poetry.

Die Enttäuschung
Die Enttäuschung
INTAKT CD

Die Enttäuschung translates as *The Disappointment* and features bass clarinettist Rudi Mahall, trumpeter Axel Dörner, bassist Jan Roder and drummer Uli Jennessen. For their first two releases the quartet presented radical rethinks of the Thelonious Monk songbook, including a three CD set of Monk's entire output with pianist Alex von Schlippenbach. This self-titled disc marks the group's first presentation of their own material. For the most part the music has a rapidfire, small group sound immediately comparable to the early Ornette Coleman Quartet records, with Dörner and Mahall chasing parallel lines and free breakdowns with snappy, post-bop agility. Mahall's writing in particular recalls some of Charlie Haden's Music Liberation Orchestra conceptions, but the rhythm section lacks the kind of amphetamine chops to make this kind of fast, statement-heavy jazz really move. As a result the disc feels a little unanchored, with most of the action taking place in the higher registers with little of the kind of rhythmic lubrication it's crying out for.

Satoko Fujii Min-Yoh Ensemble
Fujin Raijin
VICTO CD

Fujin Raijin presents a series of settings of Japanese min-yoh – folk music – by classically trained jazz pianist Satoko Fujii recorded live in the studio in New York in 2006. Fujii's ensemble features trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, trombonist Curtis Hasselbring and accordionist Andrea Parkins. For the most part it's emotionally and musically vacuous, with the players bringing a squeaky clean gloss to the readings of folk songs and originals while flatlining every awkward nuance in favour of the kind of rigorously mapped and selfconsciously epic stylings that increasingly pass for 'jazz' in the mainstream. Trumpeter Natsuki Tamura take solos that are breathtaking in their overwrought emotional patness, while Andrea Parkins provides the sole moments of interest by working creaking wheezes and charged drones into some of the less policed areas. Perhaps the closest comparison would be trumpeter Dave Douglas's ruminative work circa *Charms Of The Night Sky* rescored in a more airbrushed Athena poster style. Tragic.

The Geordie Approach
Why Eye
BRUCE'S FINGERS CD

If you are able to get past the awful North East of England puns involved in the title and group name of this Norwegian/English improvising trio's debut release on bassist Simon H Fell's label, there are some interesting, if still fairly nascent, attempts at pollinating established free Improv modes with noise, tonal Industrial/Ambient washes and funk rock moves. The trio is two parts Norwegian, with Petter Frost Fadnes on alto sax and electronics and Ståle Birkeland on drums and percussion, joined by Geordie (ie Newcastle based) guitarist Chris Sharkey. The opening salvo is impressive, a railroad of non-stop electronics, sax and percussion that sacrifices any conventional notion of dynamics in favour of a synchronic three-way gush. As a statement of intent it proves they are a little more forward thinking than many of their improvising contemporaries, but it still feels rudimentary, not to say a little dull in the light of the kind of ecstatic noise/Improv of free rock musicians like Matthew Bower and Phil Todd. The presence of some fairly leaden funk moves only serves to finally sink what could have been another great release on one of the last bastions of independent European experimental labels.

Billy Jenkins
Songs Of Praise Live!
BABEL CD

Guitarist Billy Jenkins's approach to jazz and blues improvisation had always emphasised the more ludic aspects of free playing, his records stacking up the goof quotient in a similarly unwieldy manner to US counterpart Eugene Chadbourne. But whereas Chadbourne always came across as a punk who used doofy comedic strategies as a way of simultaneously usurping and bolstering various outsider modes, Jenkins seemed more like a comedian who used punk guffaws as a way of lending credibility to what was more or less an updating of a particularly schticky vaudeville routine. *Songs Of Praise Live* was a project designed to celebrate Jenkins's 50th birthday, and this recording comes from a Leeds show in October 2006 with a group that includes This Heat's Charles Hayward on drums and Oren Marshall on tuba. The bulk of the running time is made up of fairly rigid readings of generic blues and jazz given the occasional banana skin in the way of brief breakdowns or sudden tempo changes that facilitate the occasionally diverting solo. Jenkins's guitar playing sounds pretty tough when he really cuts loose, but the main motive seems to be one of simple entertainment within mutually agreed parameters. What was undoubtedly a gas for the believers on the night comes across like an excruciatingly zany set of matey musical comedy as favoured by jobbing duds like Jools Holland when listened to at home.

Joëlle Léandre & Kevin Norton
Winter In New York – 2006
LEO CD

Winter In New York presents a beautifully recorded live performance from the duo of bassist Joëlle Léandre and drummer Kevin Norton that took place at New York's Stone in December 2006. Léandre has a uniquely disobedient vocal tone on the double bass, one that implies a lot of vertical space, and Norton is the perfect foil for her wavering tonal constructions, as he balances moments of horizontal dynamism with an atmospheric use of bells and small percussion instruments, exaggerating the huge gulf of silence that the pair inhabit across the space of this recording. At points they descend into deep chamber sonorities, with Léandre moving from hypnotic, almost Jimmy Garrison-esque slides while Norton illuminates pizzicato melodies with soft, punctuating vibes. Léandre's occasional use of her own voice serves to repeatedly relocate this music in a spontaneous, non-idiomatic zone. Some of the most beautiful passages occur when the pair drop down into barely-audible sonorities, with Norton shaving feedback harmonics from his cymbals which Léandre serrates with tactile scurries and held-tones, and this tense, focused atmosphere extends through the entire set.

Evan Parker & Ned Rothenberg
Live At Roulette
ANIMUL CD

Saxophonists Evan Parker and Ned Rothenberg are renowned for their athletic feats of circular breathing as well as the way they graft freely improvised modes onto unlikely carriers, with both players infecting previously inoculated forms with concentrated shots of freedom. Together they make for an ear-boggling combination. Throughout *Live At Roulette*, recorded at the New York club on 10 October 2006, it's often hard to make out exactly who is doing what, as their trails dovetail to such an extent that hackneyed notions like dialogue are immediately disposed of in favour of a bracing simultaneity. If anything, Rothenberg sounds the hungriest here, and his often acerbic lines put a firecracker behind the whole deal. At points Parker states the vaguest outline of an idea, a quick sketch in light, and Rothenberg will instantly inflate it to a fully-realised movement, expanding on Parker's architectures with literate ferocity. There is barely a pause for actual cognition from start to finish and even on the rare occasions where the momentum threatens to slacken, the feeling of accelerated stasis make the pair seem like cartoon Roadrunners, endlessly clawing at the air and still, miraculously, airborne.

Mathieu Werchowski & David Chiesa
Sharp Claws Cats
SOOPA CD

Recorded live in Chancelade Abbey and Merlande Priory in France, *Sharp Claws Cats* sees violinist Mathieu Werchowksi and double bassist David Chiesa carving slow, luminous shapes into resonant space. Both players have connections to the European avant garde, with Werchowksi forging alliances with Jérôme Noetinger, Lionel Marchetti and John Russell, while Chiesa has worked with Michel Doneda and Xavier Charles as well as dancers like Yukiko Makamura and Veronique Albert. Across five improvised tracks the duo bookend dark pools of silence with thin smears of light, the strings singing with glissing overtones and the kind of intimately focused dronework that would combine the psychedelic string work of Takehisa Kosugi with Gothic chamber tones. Each movement has a subtle variation in tone and attack that makes the whole album feel precisely directed, moving from dense harmonics through cyclical minimalism and hypnotic raga-esque duets with an organic logic. A beautifully conceived set.

Michael Zerang
Cedarhead
AL MASLAKH CD

In April 2006, Chicago based percussionist Michael Zerang travelled to Beirut to work with a group of local improvisors he first hooked up with on a tour with saxophonist Peter Brötzmann. *Cedarhead* compiles the best of those sessions, with Zerang playing drums, darbuka and percussion alongside a range of stylists, from the tape and electronics work of Raed Yassin and the trumpet of Mazen Kerbaj through the ney of Bechir Saadé and the electric guitars of Sharif Sehnaoui and Charbel Haber. Of the guitarists Haber is particularly inventive, drawing serrated, awkwardly articulate drones and pinging single notes from his instrument in a refreshingly monosyllabic style while Zerang works fleet constellations of tone and skin into a series of alternate orbits. Yassin's constant flux of radio sounds, wonky tapes and wowing effects sees Zerang focusing on the occasional snatches of music and working through well-imagined rhythmic extrapolations. The closing duet with Saadé's ney is both the most effective and the most traditionally sourced, with Saadé working breathy, devotional phrases around Zerang's elastic trance conceptions, recalling Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell's Fourth World stylings on the epochal *Mu* set. □

Outer Limits Reviewed by Sam Davies

Sylvain Chauveau
S.
TYPE CD

S. is a serious departure from electroacoustic composer Sylvain Chauveau's last record, which offered richly arranged versions of Depeche Mode tracks. Its strings and piano are largely stripped away here for five pieces which rather selfconsciously explore four different directions. Opener "Composition B" takes its cue from the minimalist guitar strategies of Rafael Toral et al. Over a bed of softly dying tones, Chauveau makes the most delicate interventions, touching the instrument just enough to elicit tiny electrical pops or clicks. For "P." and "A–", he returns to the piano and picks out unengaging note clusters after interminable pauses. "E/R"'s chilly electronic Ambience is full of silver-smooth sounds which tick and tock from one ear to another. *S.* is more like a prospectus for possible future work than a coherent whole.

Cheapmachines
Lowlands
AUTHORISED VERSION CD

Cheapmachines' Philip Julian has dug out his personal archives, using material recorded for a radio broadcast in 2004. Given that his source material is mostly short- and longwave transmissions, the original broadcast may have been hard to detect on the dial. Julian doesn't zero in on uncannily lyrical moments in the manner of Tod Dockstader; his sources are not left untouched. All are refracted to various degrees, and Julian uses their residues to painstakingly build layers with an astute sense of dynamics built in. The increasing prevalence of home wireless systems has led the media to worry about the inescapable electromagnetic 'smog' that is enveloping urban residents; Lowlands sounds like its sonic manifestation.

Eric Cordier
Osorezan Selected Field Recordings 1993–2006
HERBAL CD

First collection of field recordings by Eric Cordier, the man who introduced Keiji Haino (in 1992) and then Jim O'Rourke (in 1995) to the hurdy-gurdy. *Osorezan*, though, is hurdy-gurdy free. A rigorous, near-scientific series of sound documents, it was collected on Cordier's travels over the course of 13 years. The title piece records the sounds of gas bubbles escaping through water by a volcanic Japanese spring. The extreme acoustic close-ups of water and gas in fluttering, spluttering admixture make for an illusionistic experience. Dense, organic sounds are interspersed with phasing and other microphonic phenomena – which Cordier asserts were all achieved in situ – and gradually the organic is swamped by the electronic. For the other pieces he positions himself more neutrally; "Par Temp Sec", the sound of a hedgerow on a summer afternoon in rural France, is so uneventful that eventually the drone of a plane overhead and an insect flying within range of the microphone become deeply musical events.

Dead Raven Choir
My Firstborn Will Surely Be Blind
AURORA BOREALIS CD

There's something very deadpan about Dead Raven Choir. They scratch away at the extreme limits of scorched-earth harshness with enough determination for any Metal fan, but at the same time hold out the possibility of a very subtle send-up. Its trebly tinniness subverts the normal smothering sludge of the genre, and in its pillaging of folk forms seems to deliberately toying with fey wispiness. Nowhere is this more evident than on their version of "Genesis Hall", which for anyone familiar with Sandy Denny's take has a witty absurdity.

The work of one D Smolken (a native of Cracow, also behind the Julian Cope-endorsed Wolfmangler, who first got into Black Metal while living in Texas), Dead Raven Choir is nominally focused around his electric bass and bass fiddle. But Smolken's lo-fi recording equipment, an aged collection of defunct 70s Polish gear, turns the sound into a ghostly fog. The EQ 'smile' which Metal shares (perversely) with disco (high bass, low middle, high treble) is completely flattened – *My Firstborn...* is sucked dry of all substance into a hollow sonic death rattle; it's Doom with pneumonia.

Donkey
Stone
ACCRETIONS CD

Live documents tend to work well with noise; they nurture the spontaneity, the improvisation, the need to force out some fresh abomination from the means of production, that marks out the best of the scene. They foreground the fact that noise is a ludic flinging of sound at the wall, and also, ultimately, a species of performance art. *Stone* captures Donkey performing at the East Village venue of the same name in late 2006. Hans Fjellestad's analogue synth and Damon Holzborn's short-circuited electronics corkscrew in and out of each other, with a playful agility. The competitive abrasiveness which characterises much noise is sidelined for a series of dialogues in which neither Fjellestad nor Holzborn are afraid to fall completely silent for a while. But most of the time the two are zigzagging into wild tangents, modulating tone and texture, attack and decay with a restless impatience.

Shawn Greenlee
Nysa
UTECH CD
Katabasis 1
IYNGES CD

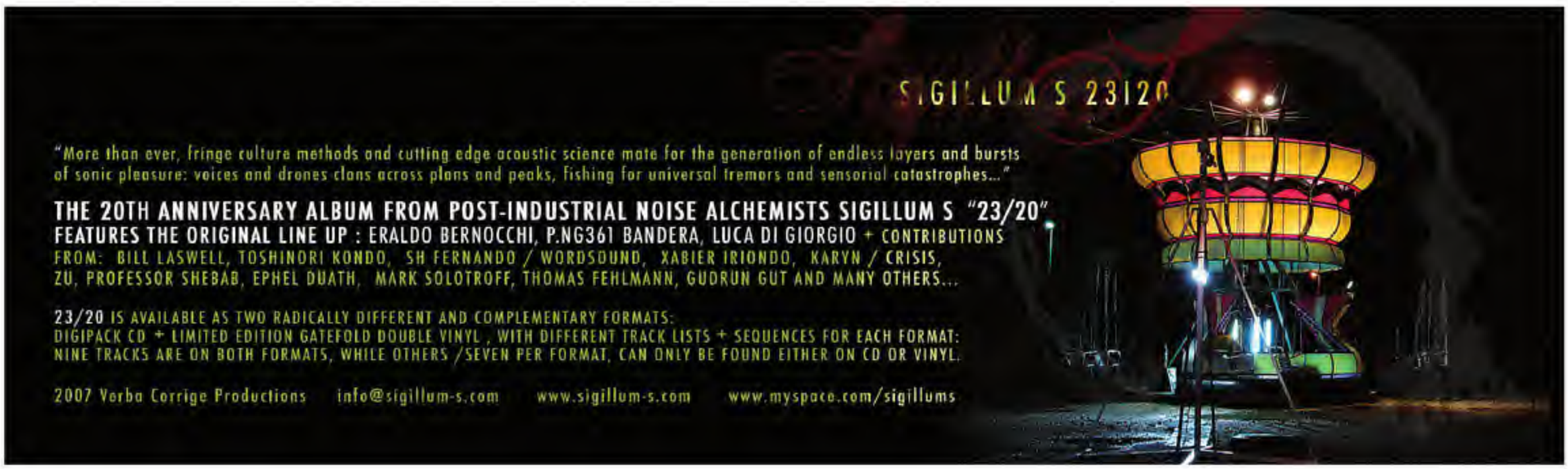
Lightning Bolt often get categorised as noise-rock, when really they're noisy rock. Shawn Greenlee, a fellow graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, and one-time member of Fort Thunder, the Providence arts collective which includes Lightning Bolt, represents the pure noise output of that nexus. He also does noise-rock, with the self-destructing sonics of Landed and formerly with the fractious electronics-spiked Six Finger Satellite. Both *Nysa* and *Katabasis 1* offer hyperactive, aggressive assaults on notions of structure and harmony. All blast and breakage, these are dark, malevolent pieces, with *Nysa* especially combative. Greenlee is in a constant rage of erasure and defacement, destroying sound-shape after sound-shape. The live videos available on his Website demonstrate an affinity between noise and performance as he lurches and heaves over his equipment.

Nick Szczepanik
Astilbe Rubra
SMALL DOSES CD

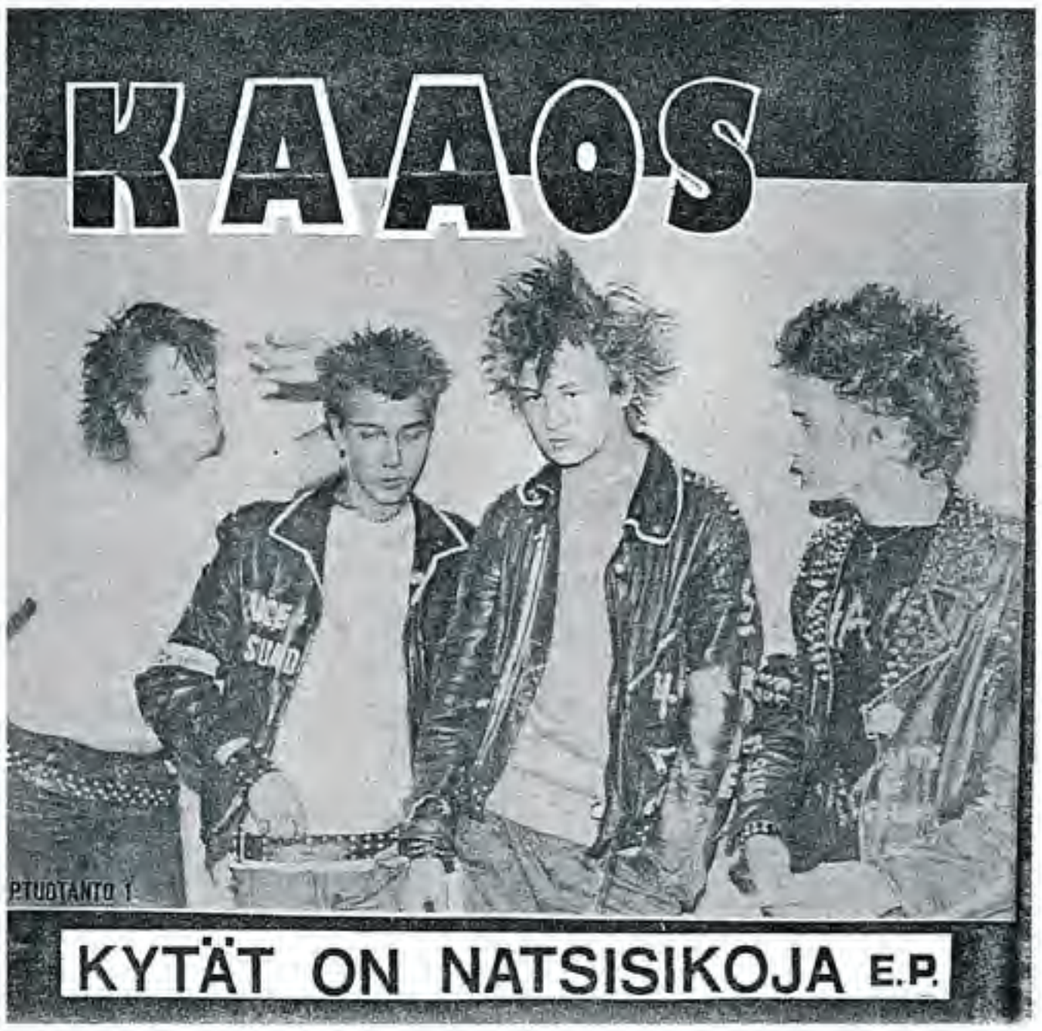
While *Astilbe Rubra* is only Nick Szczepanik's debut album, it still possesses the kind of internal logic which Sylvain Chauveau could do with. But this also pays fairly naked tribute to some of Szczepanik's influences. "Merci Manu & Sophie" for instance could easily be mistaken for one of Andrew Chalk's bare-bones drones as Mirror. The howling analogue fuzz of "Shimmer", and its abrupt descent into near-silence, punctuated by the glottal stops of a record hitting its run-out groove over and over, suggest Philip Jeck as another formative influence. These are the best, as well as the most derivative pieces, though "Convivencia", a deliberate mangling of a recorded conversation which segues seamlessly into drones and then field-recorded acoustics runs them close, as does "Tire", a patchwork of grimy organ tones.

Timeless Pulse Quintet
Timeless Pulse Quintet
MUTABLEMUSIC CD

Though Timeless Pulse Quintet took shape back in 1993 at Pauline Oliveros's Deep Listening Institute, this is only its second release. Composed of Oliveros (accordion), Mutablemusic's Thomas Buckner (vocals), George Marsh (percussion), David Wessel (electronics) and Jennifer Welsey (percussion), The Quintet weave long, reflective improvisations. The music is warm and diffuse, with a more pronounced harmony between the players than most Improv – harmony in the sense of mutual understanding rather than united in the same key. No single musician dominates – even Buckner modulates his voice so that his presence is as a tone, rather than a speaking voice. This is the inverse of the more common mode of Improv where the participants try to out-blast each other, but the Quintet avoid overcrowding with aplomb. The tracks appear to have been mastered in a sequence different to that listed on the sleeve, but such is the sense of continuity between the pieces, they feel like excerpts from one larger, unending piece, amenable to any ordering. □



The Inner Sleeve Artwork selected this month by Thurston Moore



Kaaos
Kytät On Natsisikoja
ASSEL EP 1981
UNKNOWN DESIGNER

If early 80s American hardcore had anything to offer besides a lot of shit-hot tunes ("In My Eyes" by Minor Threat, "Rabies" by Gang Green, "Nothing" by Negative Approach, "I've Got To Run" by Black Flag, "You're X'd" by The Faith, "Who Are You" by Void, "Acceptance" by Mecht Mensch, "Hinkley Had A Vision" by Crucifucks, "Sacrifice" by Flipper, "Public High School" by Necros, "Cops Are Out" by Battalion Of Saints, "Stolen Youth" by Deadline, "Full Speed Ahead" by Youth Brigade, "Burn Out" by Red Cross, "Police Brutality" by Urban Waste, "Fashionite" by Government Issue, "Attitude" by Misfits, "Girl Problems" by SOA, "Pay To Cum" by Bad Brains, "God Is Dead" by Heart Attack, "In School" by Die Kreuzen...to name a few), then it's the advent of a wholly distinct era of punk records. The first hardcore singles coming out of Washington DC's Dischord Records really set the tone with sleeves that were black and white, made on copy printers, hand folded and slipped into protective sleeves. Ian Mackaye, who helped spearhead Dischord in the early 80s, talks about taking a punk single in his teenage collection and just splitting it apart, tracing its measurement to a piece of paper and laying out their cover to that. And then Xeroxing it and kablooey – instant sleeve. And they were cheap, not precious new wave which is where 70s punk was gone to.

I was bit older than these kids, but I felt drawn towards their legion partly because they looked interesting, taking aspects of by then generic punk and wearing it in some new embrace. The chopped short hair or just plain old baldie skin, jackets emblazoned with hardcore band names, dungarees and sneakers. But the music was captivating in the way the singular idea of specific chord structure and tempo (either fast 'thrash' or slow 'skank') was dialogued between all the kids. This sharing was done by gigs where ten bands would be on the bill, all playing short sets, and the cheaply manufactured singles, sometimes with half a dozen tunes to one side. The coolest singles were the ones coming from outside the media eye cities of NYC and LA – it was Maumee, Ohio and Ann Arbor, Michigan and Austin, Texas and San Diego, California and Denver, Colorado and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

American hardcore had its models in 70s punk, especially that of the LA scene of The Germs and Middle Class, but it distinguished itself by excising the buffoonery that was a holdout of earlier rock 'n' roll to the point of becoming a music almost devoid of any influence beyond its own contemporary catalysts (Bad Brains, Black Flag, Minor Threat, Negative Approach). Sometimes activity in the rest of the world would react to this scene as an influence, but it was never really connected. *NME* had a cover story about the new legion of bands at the time and exclaimed the legend "HARDCORE" across the cover. But the bands inside were Einstürzende Neubauten, Birthday Party, Swans, Sonic Youth, Butthole Surfers, Big Black, Pussy Galore. Black Flag was in there, but it wasn't what we knew as 'hardcore' in the USA, and I remember a lot of confusion by kids buying that issue hoping to see some ink on bands like YDI, Autistic Exploits, The Neos, Insurrection, The Fartz, Sluggo, Chemotherapy, Violent Apathy, Chronic Disorder, The Mob, DOA, The Dicks, Sin 34, et al. There was a lot of UK hype about the band The Stupids, who were chosen to be the happening hardcore band, which is ridiculous, as there were already significant UK bands like Discharge, Disorder and Rudimentary Peni. But that kind of mainstream music mag hoopla was aesthetic anathema to the scene.

The only outlying nation that made an accepted connection, interestingly, was Finland. Around 1981–84 there was an influx of imported singles from Finland, mostly Helsinki and Tampere, by bands taking direct cues from American hardcore and ramping up the speed a notch or three. The sleeves were de rigueur black and white, Xeroxed sometimes to the point of abstraction, and they all had protective sleeves with a weird off-opacity. Some had images of wartime carnage and sociopolitical atrocities and a lot of them had great candid photos of the bands who took the US hardcore look, initially gleaned from LA style (which had already incorporated UK and Euro punk trends) and completely jacked it up. One of my favourites of these sleeves is the *Kytät On Natsisikoja* EP by Kaaos (which was a split with comrades The Cadgers). Semi-thick card stock with a picture of a group of boys who look totally amazing: slouched and insolent, with gobs of hair gunk and crazy killer black leather jackets with white trim. In a way, there was nowhere to go beyond this. Colour would've been death.

The Finnish hardcore scene, like its US counterpart, changed by varying factors. Some of the key players developed their devotion with music beyond hardcore. J Mascis, who played in an amazing Western Massachusetts hardcore band called Deep Wound before forming Dinosaur Jr, had the theory that the hardcore boys, who so loved to slam and circle dance and pigpile on top of each other at shows, left the scene after discovering sex. Which is cute, and probably correct. On this Kaaos single, these guys look like total sex, but maybe it's the allure of promise that's so fetching. All I know is this stuff, as generic a model as it has become to hardcore punk standard bearers, still rages like those first hormones. ☐ *Thurston Moore's* Trees Outside The Academy *is out now on Ecstatic Peace*

Print Run New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



High-decibel philosopher: Merzbow

Noise/Music: A History

Paul Hegarty

CONTINUUM PBK £12.99

The inextricable link between form and content in 'noise music' means that it's as close to being a purely conceptual artform as music gets. A kind of philosophical debate in sound form, it's a space in which contradictions are harnessed, and the resulting clash of forces can certainly make for an extreme experience. Defining a sound as 'noise' is only possible when it's thought about, but to think about it entails listening to it, and that very act stops it being noise. It's almost as if the raging chaos of noise music is the actual sound of these conflicting ideas doing battle. Trying to pin noise down can only ever be part of an ongoing process, an endless feedback loop of negations and oppositions.

The title of academic and noisician Paul Hegarty's book is somewhat misleading. It is a history of the various concepts that relate to noise-as-music rather than a chronology of the noise music genre – if such a thing exists. Perhaps more accurately, it is a personal meditation on how various aesthetic, socio-political and philosophical approaches and ideas can be applied to music and sound. Correctly noting at the outset that the very notion of defining and interrogating noise is "... contradictory, impossible, doomed to fail", Hegarty then proceeds in his heroically futile attempt to do just that. What results is a somewhat chaotic, occasionally fanciful though often insightful volume.

Drawing on (surprise, surprise) Attali, Adorno, Deleuze, Bataille, Baudrillard and Derrida, Hegarty attempts to provide a contextual framework for the main meat of his subject – post-Industrial noise in general, Merzbow in particular – by devoting the entire first half of the book to the theories posited by those illustrious forebears over the last half a century or more. A drawback of this technique is that, while Hegarty covers some of the musics that can justly claim to be relevant to his subject – 12-tone serialism, free jazz and Improv, punk – each is dealt with within the narrow philosophical parameters being outlined at that particular juncture in the book. Too much time, for example, is spent trying to wrestle with the reasons for Adorno's criticism of jazz: fine for a book on Adorno, or jazz, but not particularly helpful here.

By the time Hegarty gets to his first examples of selfconsciously anti-musical work (chiefly 80s Industrial) as opposed to earlier forms that sought to extend conventional notions of what music could be, such as musique concrète, he's more or less convinced us that noise is to be found anywhere, and that anything can be noise. Anywhere we find disruption of control, whether in the musical sphere or otherwise, we find noise. While this makes for exciting reading, it means that the narrowing of focus back to music alone in the concluding chapters on "Power Electronics", "Japanese Noise" and "Sound Art And Glitch" seem comparatively perfunctory. Despite these flaws, *Noise/Music* is as brave an attempt to grapple with an impossible subject as one could reasonably hope for. There's some brilliant writing linking notions of 'ineptitude' (chiefly via Jean Dubuffet's theories of naive and outsider art) and late 70s punk, and Hegarty is one of very few writers able to get to grips with Merzbow's work without simply dwelling on its sonic extremity.

I would suggest that there are a few questions that Hegarty might have found profitable to explore. Too often he equates 'traditional' musical form with the social or political status quo, as if this has been simply imposed from above by the ruling class, and sidesteps the idea of the logical, mathematical, even biological basis of pitch, harmony and rhythm, both in Western and other musics. Additionally, he fails to make the obvious connection between Roland Barthes's idea of the desirability of the 'grain' of the human voice and the sound produced by all other musical instruments. Without the 'grain' of the sound of friction between bow and violin – ie the vital 'noise' component of the sound – the instrument's essential character disappears. Certainly there's a case to be made for the potential of oppositional art (or noise) to act as an important adjunct to social change, but Hegarty's too unquestioning here. When he writes "the history of noise is the history of the avant garde", he could be accused of not stating the case strongly enough; it's also the history of music, the history of sound. The central question, of course, must remain unanswered: just what is noise? In the unlikely event that someone comes up with an answer, *The Wire* readers may rest assured that they will be the first to know.

KEITH MOLINÉ

Kill All Your Darlings: Pieces 1990–2005

Luc Sante

YETI/VERSE CHORUS PRESS PBK $17.95

I first encountered Luc Sante as a fellow contributor to Frank Kogan's mid- to late 80s invite-only fanzine *Why Music Sucks*, a pre-Internet chatroom-styled forum where Kogan posed questions to create dialogues about various issues in the pop music scene, both underground and mainstream. Sante is best known for his first book, 1991's *Low Life*, a meticulously researched account of Manhattan's Lower East Side at its most squalid (in the 19th and early 20th centuries). *Kill All Your Darlings* is a sampling of his work for periodicals. Sante is erudite not only about music but literature and photography; he has come to embody a highbrow approach to 'low' culture.

Kill All Your Darlings is divided into five sections. The first, dealing with his observations of contemporary New York (which includes "My Lost City", one of the best essays anywhere about the gentrification of the East Village) is well focused, as is the section that collects his music writing. There's an appreciation of *Nuggets*, which abounds with insights such as "the history of pop music goes marching by in 18-month segments, generations that last two years...teenage time, in other words". A piece on The Mekons carries the wonderful description of Jon Langford and Tom Greenhalgh's voices alternating "like the night out and the morning after" and then wistfully imagines that the group's 'lost in the shuffle' major label bow, 1989's *Rock And Roll*, carried them to the pinnacle of pop stardom.

Other music pieces here are problematic – "The Invention Of The Blues", a survey of books by Alan Lomax, Peter Guralnick and others, takes the well-worn tracings of blues history at face value. As in many other pieces here, Sante is playing to his audience; it originally ran in the *New York Review Of Books* and in this case he needs to explain the blues to their literate but general readership. At times the book feels more like a primer of Luc Sante the freelance writer, rather than Luc Sante the writer – and the line between the two should be invisible.

Sante plays his trump card in the final section, though, which only has two essays – one on Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, one on Arthur Rimbaud – that are easily the most impassioned and inspired writing in the entire book. He recollects how *Howl* was the siren's call that drew him to New York City from his suburban home, and how he idolised the man but curiously never sought out his friendship despite living in the same building for 11 years.

It goes unsaid, but Ginsberg's passing is particularly emblematic of Sante's lost city. He remembers measuring himself against Rimbaud for a certain period of his adolescence; born the same year (a century apart), and in roughly the same location (Rimbaud was born near Belgium, Sante's birthplace), he ultimately comes to realise the inimitability of his chosen role model. It's a beautiful evocation of the growth to maturity both as an artist and a person. By placing the two essays on poets at the end of the book, the rhyming effect of the recurring motifs in the selection of essays – New York City, Belgium, the seamier fringes of popular culture, the search for identity and illumination – suddenly becomes clear. If *Kill All Your Darlings* seems scattered thematically as a collection of prose, read as an epic poem it all falls into place.

ALAN LICHT

Manifesto For Silence: Confronting The Politics And Culture Of Noise

Stuart Sim

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS HBK £9.95

I step out into the garden to discover strange, captivating silence, so decide to read a book outside. Minutes later I sit down and hear, at the edge of perception, a disturbance. Now it has caught my attention I can't ignore it, so gradually it moves to the forefront of my hearing where I comprehend the noise as a distant car alarm. This continues until something else takes over, or the alarm stops. My book lies unread; I can't concentrate due to the colonisation of my attention by this frantic, pernicious racket. This is one of the difficulties of noise. In a situation about as blissfully quiet as a major city can offer, one insidious noise can become intolerable. Recently published research by the World Health Organisation suggests that excessive noise can trigger heart disease by increasing sustained levels of stress hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline. Like smoking and air pollution, noise kills.

Noise generates a lot of complaints, but at the level of government policy, it's regarded as more of a social nuisance than a health risk. With this unashamedly campaigning book, Stuart Sim hopes to set a change in motion. Now I don't need any persuasion on this issue. Noise drives me nuts: local council days of mowing and pruning; police helicopters that shake the windows; motorway roar spreading over miles of countryside; high-ceilinged bars full of glass, metal and shouting oafs; machine-noise in rooms that are supposed to be silent; drunks 'conversing' in the street at 4am; somebody listening to the thin residue of a tune on their mobile in a so-called quiet coach on the train; amplified announcements telling us to watch our bags, touch in and touch out, switch off our engines; and so on and so on. Just thinking about noise is a health risk.

What Sim attempts is the construction of an argument, based on ideas gathered from philosophy, music, painting and literature, religious practice, language and speech, to describe the proliferation of noise and the reasons why silence, or a reasonable balance of silence and noise, is vital to humanity and the environment.

It's a timely enterprise and I want to be with him all the way. He discusses John Cage, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Thomas Merton, Samuel Beckett, Gillian Wearing and Ingmar Bergman, and draws on the ideas of Susan Sontag, Jacques Derrida, Quakerism, Taoism and much else. The book is short, but that's how a manifesto should be. There are some omissions – R Murray Schafer or any environmental sound theory, any post-Cage sound work and music directly addressing issues of silence and acoustic ecology, Bart Kosko's book on noise, Robert Lax, Philip Groning's film, *Into Great Silence* – but never mind, no argument should overwhelm and alienate a sceptic (or politician).

My real problem with the book comes from a blimpish lack of engagement with amplified music, and why that is so significant to the problems of curbing noise and encouraging silence, both of them complex conditions that defy definition. "Too young to bring about change," writes Lavinia Greenlaw in her memoir, *The Importance Of Music To Girls*, "we brought about disturbance." Noise is so often central to social belonging and the shaping of identity that a plea for silence must inevitably suggest a kind of joyless slide into death. In the face of this constant truth, the anti-noise activist has a difficult task.

DAVID TOOP

This Is Your Brain On Music: Understanding A Human Obsession

Daniel Levitin

ATLANTIC PBK £17.99

The Ramones got it wrong, apparently. They were being anatomically incorrect in the song "Teenage Lobotomy" when they rhymed *"I got no cerebellum"* with *"Now I guess I'll have to tell 'em"*. A lobotomy, as Daniel Levitin helpfully points out, involves "the surgical separation of a portion of the frontal lobe, the prefrontal cortex, from the thalamus". A former session musician, sound engineer and record producer, Professor Levitin now runs the Laboratory of Musical Perception, Cognition and Expertise at McGill University, so it's understandable that he'd have the layout of the human brain at his fingertips, as it were – but what is it that makes scientists debase themselves in this manner? Their need to educate the public often verges on the unseemly. You can imagine them at parties carefully explaining the joke after everyone else has already cracked up, as if they have to kill off the laughter before it has a chance to die away.

Get past the MTV generation drug reference folded into the title, and it's only 11 pages before Levitin finally breaks down and admits that his book is about "the science of music". This, for the most part, involves the redistribution of common knowledge as it pertains to both science and music. "Repetition," one chapter portentously concludes, "when done skilfully by a master composer, is emotionally satisfying to our brains, and makes the listening experience as pleasurable as it is."

The problem with pop science books of this nature is not that they confound expectations but that they confirm them. Schoenberg's scales, for example, are dismissed as "a music adrift" to be "used in movies to accompany dream sequences to convey a lack of grounding, or in underwater or outer space scenes to convey weightlessness". Fans of Sting and The Police will not be disappointed, however. Compared to Schoenberg's three paltry entries in the index, they boast an impressive 12 separate mentions between them. Playing with common knowledge at least has the advantage of yielding fairly unsurprising results. "We found exactly what we predicted," Levitin announces when fMRI imaging revealed some correlation between parts of the brain activated while paying attention to musical structure and those involved in the understanding of language.



COURTESY RHINO HOME VIDEO

No cerebellum: The Ramones

"We found exactly what we had hoped," he further declares after discovering in a similar fashion that listening to music causes "a cascade of brain regions to become activated", triggering production of the neurotransmitter dopamine, resulting in a more positive state of mind. "Music is clearly a means for improving people's moods," Levitin notes. "Now we think we know why."

When not being cautiously confident about the blindingly obvious, the book maintains a chatty and informal tone throughout: the author's encounters with Francis Crick and Joni Mitchell are conveyed with an equally disarming enthusiasm and provide its most interesting parts.

Perhaps a more interesting line of inquiry is not how scientific music is but the degree to which its listeners reject science, glorying in the irrational and choosing excited ignorance and ecstatic numbness over sober understanding. Or as Tommy Ramone once remarked, rejecting the criticism that The Ramones' musical output wasn't varied enough: "What do you expect? Flugelhorns?"

KEN HOLLINGS

On Screen Films & DVDs

20 To Life: The Life And Times Of John Sinclair

DIR STEVE GEBHARDT 2007, 86 MIN
MODE DVD

It's salutary to recall just how high John Sinclair's cultural cachet was in the late 1960s. The opening shots on this documentary featuring John Lennon and Yoko Ono protesting his jail sentence for possession of marijuana on live television underline the centrality of his role in setting a particular cultural political agenda with post-Beat rock audiences. Indeed, his vision was so radical, positioned as he was at a nexus between so many revolutionary artforms – free jazz, high energy rock, hallucinogenic drugs, the new poetry – that it can't help but throw into harsh relief his relative disconnection from contemporary outlaw culture.

Throughout this documentary, co-produced by Sinclair himself, we're repeatedly jump-cut into live performances and recording sessions that match Sinclair's poetry with some of the most identikit bar band jazz and blues ever chug-a-lugged by white guys. Sinclair's seeming inability to take his own revolutionary tenets – his proposed "total assault on culture" – any further forward than where it stalled circa 1972 speaks of an artist and activist who is more interested in perpetuating a nostalgic and fixed view of a culture that has grown without and beyond him than of a vanguard iconoclast. His failure to embrace the music and modes of the underground that came in his wake – ideas that have effectively furthered his concept of generic cross-pollination, of total musical freedoms, of rock music fully infected by free jazz and primitive amp-humping ritual – seems to hint at a lack of genuine interest in insurrection and a concomitant commitment to old-hippie posturing and the continued gatekeeping of the 1960s legacy.

With all that in mind, the first part of the documentary is fairly engaging, although it lacks any extended archive footage of Sinclair or his protégés The MC5, making do for the most part with inane stock shots of flower children dancing and the occasional flash of Wayne Kramer, Rob Tyner and Fred 'Sonic' Smith leg-synching to MC5 recordings. Indeed, outside of Sinclair, Kramer's brief interview sections (which look as if they were filmed in jail) provide the film's sole energy centres, while other interviewees tend more towards the "it was like.... 'Wow'" school of non-communication. Most of the MC5 saga is pretty much skimmed over, although we do get interesting sections on the brain-bombing style of the Detroit Artists Workshop (still one of the most consistently interesting small presses to come out of the 1960s) as well as the later Trans-Love Energies and White Panther Party.

But the film pretty much runs out of gas as soon as Sinclair beats his jail rap. At one point he shrugs when he recalls people coming up to him on the street after he was freed, telling him to lighten up and quit going on about the pigs. "Uh, OK," was his response. But with mainstream culture more heavily policed than ever and a current political situation that feels dangerously unbalanced and a whole new generation of young musicians – a modern Guitar Army! – fully committed to free music, noise and appalling squares, lightning rods like the late-60s John Sinclair seem more important and potentially more perfectly placed than ever. Perhaps Sinclair should look towards someone like Julian Cope for a lesson in how to remain a truly forward-thinking motherfucker. As it is, you're left with footage of him jamming bar band blues while delivering his poetry in such a mannered, era-specific style that he sounds uncomfortably like Mike Myers's beatnik character from *So I Married An Axe Murderer*. But imagine him spitting those same blues all over the music of Sonic Youth or Borbetomagus or even Wolf Eyes. Going by this documentary, it looks like someone has gotta free John Sinclair all over again.

DAVID KEENAN



Ian Curtis (Sam Riley) and Annik Honoré (Alexandra Maria Lara) in *Control*

Control

DIR ANTON CORBIJN 2007, 119 MINS

One of the funnier moments in what is a surprisingly amusing film in places is when Annik Honoré, the young Belgian journalist with whom Ian Curtis becomes fatally besotted, says to him, eyes wide with fascination, "Tell me about Macclesfield." Joy Division were from that decidedly unromantic, obdurately glum Northern town, brought up there in a desperately glum decade, the 70s, among the fixtures and fittings of much earlier decades. Director Anton Corbijn wanted to recreate that dire sense of time and place, the bus shelter bleakness in which the group's members were nurtured. And yet, despite their deliberate and inescapable Northern bluntness and unvarnished Macclesfieldness, Peter Hook in particular, despite their farting and "fookings" and ale swilling, there is a still, haunting, mythical quality about Joy Division which Ian Curtis's suicide by hanging in 1980 sealed rather than created. The film was made in black and white, Corbijn has said, in order to exacerbate the feel of the period. Had he really wanted to do that, he would have filmed it in colour, revealing the depressing brown, orange and maroon gaudiness of the place and era. By filming it in monochrome, he's helped exacerbate the frozen marble aura of Joy Division.

There isn't much in the way of musical and political context to this film. A line is drawn from David Bowie to The Sex Pistols through to Curtis, but there isn't much sense of the contemporary post-punk scene, or even of other Factory goings on. Certain of Curtis's less appealing quirks are overlooked here, too – the fact that he not only voted Conservative in 1979 but also persuaded the Liberal candidate to give him a lift to the polling station. This doesn't really matter, however. This film is essentially, inexorably, about Curtis's insoluble dilemma – whether to remain with Deborah, whom he married very young in 1975, and the domestic security and responsibility that entailed, or whether to pursue Annik, who epitomises the faraway hankerings of Joy Division's music. The epileptic attacks he suffers are a cruel addition to his lot, as if nature has already marked him out as ill fated.

Sam Riley, a relatively unknown Yorkshire actor, is an excellent Curtis, capturing his sad-eyed, torn apart, creatively compelled air. He and his fellow actors also do a startlingly good job as a Joy Division 'tribute band' – indeed, Joy Division themselves were a bit wartsy and rough by comparison with Riley and co. Corbijn being a photographer, it's unsurprising that there is a frieze-like quality to *Control* – scenes, such as the group sitting in stunned silence following Curtis's suicide feel like tableaux. However, Toby Kebbell as manager Rob Gretton dispels any excessive clouds of sombreness with the film's funniest, most puncturing dialogue, especially when insisting that Tony Wilson, who has just signed a contract with Joy Division using his own blood, stump up a drop more to add a supposed missing "S" to drummer Steve Morris's name.

DAVID STUBBS



Still from Rechenzentrum's "Expedition Existenz" video

Rechenzentrum
Silence

WEISER MUSIK DVD

Silence is a reflection on meditation. After a four year hiatus, the Berlin based audio-visual artists return with a collection of compositions – by the collective's musical partners, Christian Conrad and Marc Weiser – presented against black and white or monochrome visualisations created by video artist Lillevan. Their inspiration is the Russian icon painter Andrei Rublev. In a modern world obsessed with self-expression, the art of the icon painter stands at a polar opposite. Religiously inspired, the icon painter wants to express nothing of himself but everything about God, love, nature and compassion.

Rechenzentrum have clearly ruminated on this selfless mode of expression. What emerges is a series of electroacoustic abstractions paired with images inspired by the rhythms and textures of nature. The tick-tock beat of "Expedition Existenz" is pinned out against what could be the veins of leaves, the bones of fish or the ribs and buttresses of a hugely magnified spore. "Jeru Salem" glides the grain of wood against fissure cracked mud and billowing clouds with sounds that suggest undulating marshland. The vocal track "10+5" declares in an elegiac swell that *"Everything that lives wants love"*, while images that could be the magnified folds of bark or a forest seen from space form a texture against which the ghostly outlines of people drift. The series closes with the mid-tempo Techno funk osf "Eye For An Eye", which shows geometric forms ploughing through airstreams in an eternal dance of flow and resistance, action and reaction, the grace of nature's design alive for our ears and eyes.

KEITH MOLINÉ

On Site Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc

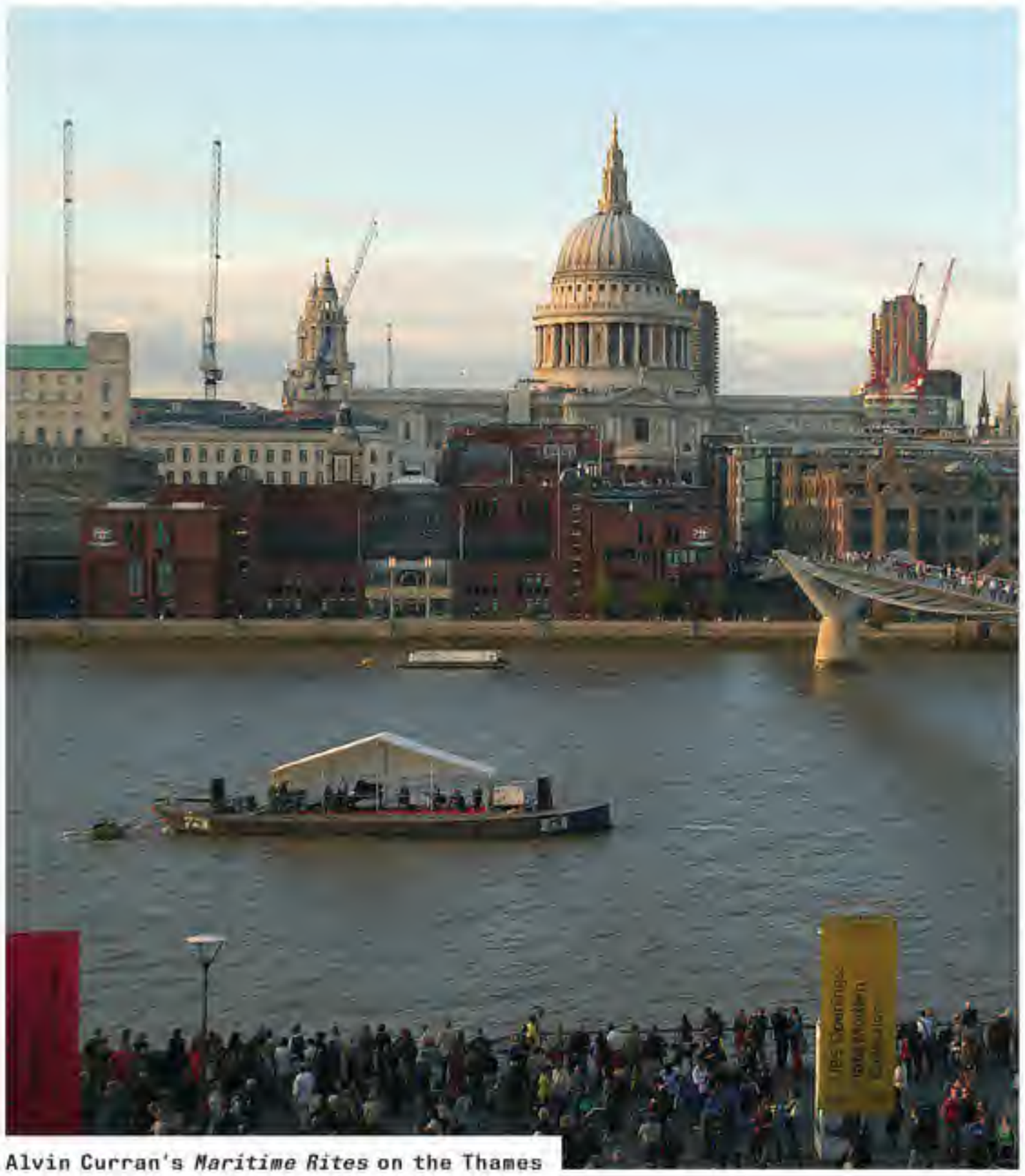
Alvin Curran
Maritime Rites
TATE MODERN
LONDON, UK

American composer Alvin Curran has a deep attachment to the sound of foghorns. The London realisation of his *Maritime Rites* began with a powerful evocation of their booming ostinato. Curran, playing piano and a suitably primed sampler, was located on a barge in the middle of the sunlit Thames, opposite Tate Modern, which had commissioned the early evening event. With him were saxophonist Evan Parker, cellist Anton Lukoszevieze and tuba player Melvyn Poore. Horn blasts recurred throughout the piece, signalling far more than a personal predilection; fog has long been a keynote of the city's mythology, as well as a real aspect of its climate. And *Maritime Rites*, previously performed in New York and Sydney harbours, is a composition in which creative immediacy enters into dialogue with physical realities and historical associations.

River traffic went about its usual business; gulls circled overhead; the dome of St Paul's Cathedral loomed in the background. Music emanating from the barge seemed to envelop that stretch of the river, involving everyone within earshot. It was abstract yet highly energised and suggestive, a dissonant polyphony evoking the river's ceaseless flow, urban clamour, work and trade, grandeur laced with violence. This was a genuinely challenging concert/installation staged in a bustling public arena. With hardcore radicals like Parker, Lukoszevieze and Poore on board, Curran was pulling no punches. Other performers were involved. Brass players from The London Symphony Orchestra, seated beside the Tate, punctuated the 90 minute piece with sequences of scored formality including ironic quotes from Handel's *Water Music*, premiered on another barge on the Thames in 1717. Patronage for Curran's event came from a financial institution, and a few of their staff were enrolled as orchestral musicians, participating along with other volunteers standing on the narrow Millennium Bridge. They were conducted by Tan Lochotinam and sounded engagingly ragged and enthusiastic.

A loud event occupying a huge space, Curran's montage often grew dense, filled with clashes and overlaps, but the projection and distribution of the music through speakers remained remarkably well defined and detailed. Walking along the river bank, different aspects came to light, different centres of interest surfaced. A carillon written especially for the bells of St Paul's apparently fed into the culminating moments. I didn't hear them, but the instrumentalists came together in an exultant interlocking peal that seemed an entirely appropriate response to the opening foghorn's ponderous boom.

JULIAN COWLEY



Alvin Curran's *Maritime Rites* on the Thames

GARY S WEEKES (CURRAN); MARTIN FLICKING (GRAIN)


Nonplace urban field: Grain Power Station

Grain
GRAIN POWER STATION
KENT, UK

Situated at the northern end of the county of Kent, washed by the estuaries of the Thames and Medway rivers, the Isle Of Grain is a singularly bleak and rather beautiful place. It is not exactly an island – being tethered to the mainland at its western extreme – but feels weirdly detached from the populous towns of Rochester and Strood, only a few miles away. It is a sodden, grey territory: sporadically settled and largely given over to vast oil refineries and storage facilities, which gleam at the horizon on a sunny September evening. But the most resonant thing in the landscape is the huge power station that looms just beyond a quiet residential street and gives a constant low, eerie hum.

Artists have long been attracted to the desolate allure of such places, where cold, lapping shores and buzzing pylons combine to conjure up a post-industrial sublime. (Dungeness, to the south, the subject of works by artists such as Tacita Dean and Joe Banks, is the cheerier nuclear cousin to Grain.) But the Grain event, commissioned by Ben and Tim Eastop of Art Projects, was at its best more than a direct response to the strangeness of the territory and its lowering technological relic. The eight artists involved channelled the crackling energies of the place in variously oblique and layered ways.

At the perimeter of the station itself, Jeremy Millar's *Time-Mirror* sounded from four speakers. Its title was taken from a book about Andrei Tarkovsky, whose 1979 film *Stalker*, filmed at a disused power station in Estonia, concerns a mysterious 'Zone', capable of making one's deepest desires come true. Recordings of rain and squeaking bats at the Estonian station competed with Millar's resetting of sounds from the landscape at Grain and fleeting (maybe half-imagined) snatches of the *Stalker* soundtrack. As the bats got louder, and a slow train was heard rattling in the distance, you felt you were being drawn slowly into a nameless space somewhere between Grain and Tarkovsky's reinvented Estonia.

Time-Mirror deftly eluded the main danger with site specific sound works: the urge to allegorise the landscape, to turn atmosphere and evidence into seamless narrative. There was an element of this in Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's admittedly affecting *Far Gone And Out*, based around recordings of each of the artists undergoing 'past life regression': complete with tunnels, distant lights, the whole New Age scenography of spirited time travel. In a way, this was rather too plainly a mirror of the landscape's strange manner of being-between, its status as a nonplace where energy is stored.

The most successful works tended both to stick close to the site itself and at the same time conjure up an invisible elsewhere. Lee Patterson's extremely intimate recordings of the interstices of the surrounding landscape – all within 100 metres of the station – mixed the sounds of high tension cables and chainlink fences with the rippling of ponds and rustle of undergrowth, so that it seemed the whole territory was coming electrically alive. While it was easy, as a visitor, to get the sense that this land was somehow moribund without artistic resuscitation, Andrew Dodd's *Alive!*, a notional soundtrack to a horror film, performed by local teenagers, reminded us that these edge-lands are also somebody's backyard, childhood playground and adolescent refuge.

All of this unfolded in a disused, overgrown, L-shaped car park, slumped between the power station and the Medway estuary. It made for a natural amphitheatre that was gradually, as the sun declined, bathed in golden light. By the time Yue Luping's *Echo Of The Working Class* started up from the speakers – with its massed choir and overlapping voices of laid-off Chinese factory workers – most of the audience was standing transfixed, staring in the direction of the power station. Stuart Dodman's playback fireworks, *Event Series F (During) 5th November 2005* provided a final ending, and suddenly it was dark.

BRIAN DILLON

Underground Resistance at Numusic



Pole



Altern8



The Bug



DJ Sniff & Keir Neuringer at Night Of The Unexpected



Moha!



Michiyo Yagi



Edgard Varèse's *Poème Électronique*



On Location Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

Numusic 2007

TOU SCENE/VARIOUS VENUES
STAVANGER, NORWAY

The theme of this year's eighth edition of the five-day West Coast Festival of Numusic was 'back to basics'. But just how much of this multi-faceted festival, held in the pretty and compact Norwegian town of Stavanger, reflected a genuine 'back to basics' policy was open to interpretation. That's not to say the successes weren't plentiful. The organisation was slicker than previously, the organic food spot-on, and their green credentials gleamed, with recycling facilities and fair trade coffees throughout. Satellite events, like the Dial-A-Diva phone-in gig-a-thon and the Nuart exhibition of street art, worked well as an adjunct to the main fest. And the audience numbers were certainly up, with main venue Tou Scene thronging every night with a young, curious crowd.

Much of the music was similarly outstanding. Avant garde cellist Charles Curtis's surprise unadvertised concert, performing his collaboration with Eliane Radigue, *Naldjorlak*, in the catacomby, candlelit beer cellars of Tou Scene, an old brewery, was a meditative and absorbing affair. Focusing on the instrument's deviant 'wolf tone', there was something primal about his ground-out scratches and harmonics that wound their way out of his performance.

At the Folken venue in Stavanger's city centre, Krautrock originals Cluster transported the audience through dark, heavy and dank machinery, harnessing the sound of a broken universe with a lattice of gongs, beats, stabs of noise and Ambient metallics. Deceptively simple but impressively evocative.

Back on Tou's second stage, Felix Kubin's sharp humour made for one of the most enjoyable performances of the festival. Unlike the parade of 'wacky' geeks prancing behind laptops (all too prevalent elsewhere at this year's event), Kubin's wit never tried to outdo his music, a mix of harsh Hardcore two-step and freaky fried rhythms.

The Bug were fantastic (despite the earbleed volume), bringing the brashness of inner city London to the polite air of Stavanger; while an ever impressive Pole submerged the listener in subtly engineered bliss, building gradually and expertly into a swathe of sound which would then morph into shapes according to his wont.

Legendary Detroit technicians Underground Resistance kicked off their marathon five hour *Interstellar Fugitives* set on a high, their tough-love rhythms coupled with customary melodic panache. UR's Cornelius roused what crowd there was (on the evidence of the thinly populated dancefloor, the 90s Techno revolution passed Stavanger by), while an anonymous (masked) drummer bombarded his drum machine with his fists as though his life depended on it. But a scheduling clash with, erm, Altern8 next door meant that a UR DJ was left to finish the set to an emptying room.

Numusic always offers the chance to unearth many fascinating native Norwegian underground denizens. Killl, featuring members of Jaga Jazzist, Single Unit, JR Ewing and No Place To Hide, emptied their respective sounds into a sonic test tube with explosive results. Intense, sick Metal meets electronic noise: this was like a claw grabbing you by the throat, with a jagged screaming yellow-red striped eyefuck backdrop. Orangebox, in contrast, were like a waiflike teenage Portishead, tempering the melancholia by adding sweet crunchy electronics, a flamboyant flautist and playful creative touches – playing on wineglasses and using an airFX box.

But there were also some unfortunate misses, making for an air of pop mediocrity. The grating Mungolian Jetset pumped out a muddy World jazz mash. Frost singer Aggie Peterson had a great voice but her songs failed to ignite. Ost & Kjeks sounded interesting on paper, but peddled a standard banging House set. While populist electronica pioneer Jean-Jacques Perrey's Q&A talk may have been fascinating, detailing his painstaking cut 'n' splice tape loop past, his set was like the worst guilty pleasure. He and colleague Danacountryman mimed their way through his irredeemably cutesy cartoon set while Perrey's oversized sparkling gold jacket only added to the surreal pantomime effect.

Aside from some unfortunate programming clashes, exacerbated by long distances between some venues, Numusic is developing into one of Scandinavia's stronger and more diverse events. With plans to open a fourth stage at Tou Scene in 2008 – when Stavanger becomes European Capital of Culture – let's hope it's easier to experience everything they have to offer.

SUSANNA GLASER

Night Of The Unexpected

PARADISO
AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

The principal idea behind this event is that, with a virtually seamless succession of activity throughout the three levels of Amsterdam's Paradiso over four hours, the audience are less likely to fixate on their favourites than get swept along in the flow.

The night began in the main hall with three ten-minute sections in quick succession. Edgard Varèse's *Poème Électronique* was a dramatic start, with its timeless mix of electronics, concrète chunks and expressionist jumpcuts, and with accompanying visuals. As the last note died away, a spotlight fell on a pale, heavily tattooed arm and Michiyo Yagi embarked upon a dazzling set on kotos, accompanied by some hushed vocalising. After the briefest of pauses, eyes turned upwards to the balconies flanking the hall where The Dutch Chamber Choir sang György Ligeti's *Lux Aeterna*.

On CD this piece comes across as a hallucinatory wind tunnel of voices, but here, with the men and women singers physically separated, the relatively small overlap in their parts shows the composition to be more based on a call and response between the two sections. The hushed mood at its conclusion was quickly smashed by the convulsive Norwegian drums and electronics/guitar duo, Moha!. Revving up, doing the musical equivalent of handbrake skids, then screeching to a halt, they had landed on an oddly anomalous 4/4 groove when I left to see what was happening elsewhere.

The Paradiso's Upstairs Hall is situated next to the bar and initially I felt sorry for Toshimaru Nakamura having to make his no-input mixing desk heard over the drinkers. Any such feeling evaporated when, approaching the stage, I was hit by the sonic equivalent of a blizzard of dirty snow. As a super-high frequency note suddenly emerged, people fled, grimacing, hands over ears. Soon suffering from a mixture of boredom and physical distress, I wandered down to the main hall.

With blinding spotlights, and the air heavy with stage smoke and the stench of skunk, Norse noise-merchants Jazkamer were in apocalyptic mood. With guitars, bass, two drummers and electronics, their set sounded like the cacophonous ending of a Metal track extended for 20 minutes until falling to pieces.

Back upstairs, DJ Sniff and Keir Neuringer were concluding their impressive mash-up of turntablism and sax loops. And in the packed-out Cellar Hall, experimental films by Tony and Beverly Conrad and Paul Sharits were screened. But the imminent arrival in the main space of Pole And Band proved an irresistible attraction.

Stefan Betke's music has progressed a long way from the minimal, cerebral glitch-dub of the late 90s to the muscularity of this year's LP *Steingarten*. Joined by a bass player and a drummer, this incarnation of Pole, still based on eccentrically rotating, siren-like patterns, is funkier, almost Can-like in places, with Betke grooving around onstage as dancers took to the floor.

The highpoint of the night was a formidable improvising trio of Paal Nilssen-Love on drums, Peter Brötzmann on saxes and clarinet, and Michiyo Yagi on kotos. They started off at a level of boiling intensity with Nilssen-Love flying out of the traps with breathtaking speed and intricacy. Brötzmann, expressionless, pursed his lips over the mouthpiece of his tenor sax, and wetted the reed in the leisurely manner of a man preparing to smoke a particularly fine cigar, before barking off in hot pursuit. Given both the intensity and the velocity at which they both played, I wondered if Michiyo might be bullied off the stage. But far from it; her rhythmic playing was strongly articulated and accompanied by furious strumming and string bowing.

Dälek's peculiar take on hiphop is charged up with an exploratory use of live sonics. MC Dälek is joined by a bass player and various other guys on electronic devices. They tap into rock dynamics, so when the beats stop and the track is left hanging in mid-air, it's just a hiatus before it slams back again with a massive tidal surge of sound which exemplified the concept of the evening. Wherever you were in the building, something was in full flight or just starting, which made for a deliciously disorienting four-hour happening.

MIKE BARNES

DAVID BOWEN (NUMUSIC); PETER KERS (NIGHT OF THE UNEXPECTED)

Park Nights Public Experiment: Sound
Florian Hecker/Russell Haswell/ Hans Johannsson/ Kaffe Matthews/Kjetil Thorsen
SERPENTINE GALLERY PAVILLION
LONDON, UK

Every year since 2000 the Serpentine Gallery in Kensington Gardens has commissioned a pavilion, a temporary construction that can serve as a kind of laboratory for aesthetic, scientific and social investigation of space and structure. The current pavilion, designed by Norwegian architect Kjetil Thorsen (from Snøhetta) and Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, is a wooden building defined spatially by an ascending spiral ramp that runs twice around the exterior before reaching a balcony set high inside the angular geometry of the enclosed space.

This evening of acoustic experimentation began with Kaffe Matthews, seated at her laptop, isolating, processing and projecting sounds of the building itself. The squeak and clatter of a small group of audience members shuffling down the ramp, the noise of curtains being drawn on rings along a rail and various less obvious sources fed into a stream of sound that reflected well the inherent dynamism of the Pavilion's form.

Matthews's expertise and sensitivity to the life of sounds resulted in some thrilling moments as her projections circulated around the speaker system, surging from whispers to elemental roars. Importantly, she managed to transcend the fixed nature of the loudspeaker circuit; her spatialising techniques brought the entire auditorium excitingly into play, its verticals and diagonals as well as its horizontals. Kaffe Matthews energised the space impressively.

What followed was dismal. Icelandic instrument maker Hans Johannsson is designing a violin whose resonant body is displaced into a series of solid shapes, located like little sculptures on stands. Violinist Thomas Gould, clutching the instrument's disembodied neck, demonstrated some of its potential, improvising in ways that reflected his classical training. Members of the audience tried to experiment by moving amongst the stands – the space was too cramped and congested for that to succeed.

For far too long Johannsson discussed his work in progress with fellow designer Andreas Eggerston. Their low-key delivery might have worked as a casual mid-afternoon lecture, but as darkness fell and a cool breeze blew through a stretch of the pavilion's upward spiral left open to the elements, the momentum of the occasion was rapidly dissipated and tedium inevitably set in. The dismembered violin seemed inconsequential. The audience looked bored or baffled.

Architect Kjetil Thorsen said a few words – he'd planned more but was wisely curtailed. He assured us that individual experience of collective space was what the evening was really about. The Anglo-Austrian duo of Russell Haswell and Florian Hecker then positioned themselves at their laptops for a performance designed, according to the programme notes, to expand "the frequency range of the aural horizon of the space". In practice, high and low frequencies ornamented a predominantly banal repertoire of environmental and electronic sounds. Matthews had animated the space; this duo merely performed within it.

By the end of their set around half the audience had departed, not challenged or unsettled, I suspect, but bored and disappointed. Laptop performances can be exhilarating. The ear needs to lead the way. Temporary constructions have obvious limitations but Serpentine Gallery's pavilion project offers genuine opportunities. They shouldn't be squandered as they were on this occasion.

JULIAN COWLEY

Kaffe Matthews amplifies the Serpentine Pavilion



Nate Wooley with Paul Lytton and David Grubbs
ABRONS ART CENTER
NEW YORK, USA

Nate Wooley is forging meaningful connections between avant jazz and noise aesthetics. Known for his minimal, enigmatic playing in acoustic Improv groups such as Blue Collar, the New Jersey based trumpeter has shown no qualms about embracing feedback and sound collage on solo recordings like 2005's *Wrong Shape To Be A Story Teller.* At this concert, part of the Festival Of New Trumpet Music – an annual brass convocation helmed by Dave Douglas – Wooley mingled these two approaches so seamlessly that the distinction ceased to matter.

In the first set, Wooley played improvised duets with Paul Lytton, a drummer nearly three decades his senior. Early on, the music was dominated by Lytton's formidable array of implements, including a motorised eggbeater, paint scrapers and animal shaped woodblocks. But the accident of a punctured snare drum head was just the obstruction he needed to focus his playing, which then flowed logically from sparse, playful gestures to dizzying, yet never bombastic, abstract swing. But he was most effective when he ditched his mouthpiece for a bout of low, rapid-fire murmurs, during which the horn served mainly as an amplifier for his trancelike vocal. Overall, a gritty, well-paced dialogue.

Next, guest David Grubbs joined the duo on harmonium for a semi-composed Wooley piece, *The Seven Storey Mountain.* The new texture added an enthralling air of delirium, as if the opening set were replayed as a fever dream. As Grubbs slowly summoned a humid, prismatic drone, Wooley conjured more of his sussurating trance-speech. Lytton waded in, gradually built up to a crackling density. Wooley then stuffed his trumpet microphone deep into the instrument's bell, letting fly with a turbulent, circular-breathed stream of static that approximated a layer of electronic cacophony. Eventually the players dropped out, leaving Grubbs alone amid a prerecorded ambience that suggested crickets and running water.

HANK SHTEAMER



Kemialliset Ystävät

Kemialliset Ystävät
Buffalo Bar
LONDON, UK

Given the secrecy with which Tampere's Jan Anderzén cloaks the music he produces under the name Kemialliset Ystävät – details of the exact collaborators and configurations of the Finnish psychedelic underground that create his dense, dreamlike recordings are kept deliberately vague – the opportunity to experience their music in the setting of London's tiny Buffalo Bar was like the chance to see a magician perform their act at close quarters. Tantalisingly, however, the closer you get to Kemialliset Ystävät's music, the more elusive it gets.

"Himmeli Kutsuu Minua"opens the set tonight, an almost dubwise bassline followed by percussion and ragged strummed guitar. The arrangement upends the conventional dynamic range of the rock album, where the rhythm section provides the dynamic punch and more nimble instruments the melody; instead, closely miked toy bells are the resonant pulse that anchors the track while the bass floats free. An abrasive, jarring tape loop signals the beginning of the next track, but this sonic scar steadily heals over as nurturing instrumental layers are progressively added. When an almost inhuman din surfaces again towards the end of the set, Anderzén suddenly jolts up from his crouched position at the front of the stage and is revealed as the source, hollering into a microphone with effects pedals cloaking his voice.

Rather than simply adding layer after horizontal layer of instrumentation in the manner of many American freak folk projects, like a chef preparing a deep filled sandwich, the way Kemialliset Ystävät's songs consume themselves is frequently as compelling as their initial construction. Tonight, as on record, their songs break down and restructure themselves organically, like a fallen tree slowly being engulfed by mould. Although their short, disciplined set suggests such transformations are often rigorously fashioned, the joins in the music remain invisible, and the act of creation remains just as mysterious.

DEREK WALMSLEY

NIKKI ACOTT (COLOUR OUT OF SPACE); CLAIRE TITLEY (KEMIALLISET YSTÄVÄT)


Orphan Fairytale


Henry Chopin


Kutzkelina


Phil Minton's Feral Choir

Colour Out Of Space Festival

SALLIS BENNEY THEATRE
BRIGHTON, UK

With a name borrowed from an HP Lovecraft story in which a meteorite crashes to earth, bringing with it a toxic substance of an indescribable colour, no doubt we were intended to assume that the content of Brighton's second Colour Out Of Space festival came direct from the outermost limits, and that, at the very least, our ears were going to hurt. The truth was not nearly so extreme, and all the better for it: while there was certainly noise aplenty, the schedule also offered a generous variety of vocal high jinks from the avant garde (anti-) establishment, along with a host of sounds from newer outfits mixing analogue instrumentation and electronics to interesting effect.

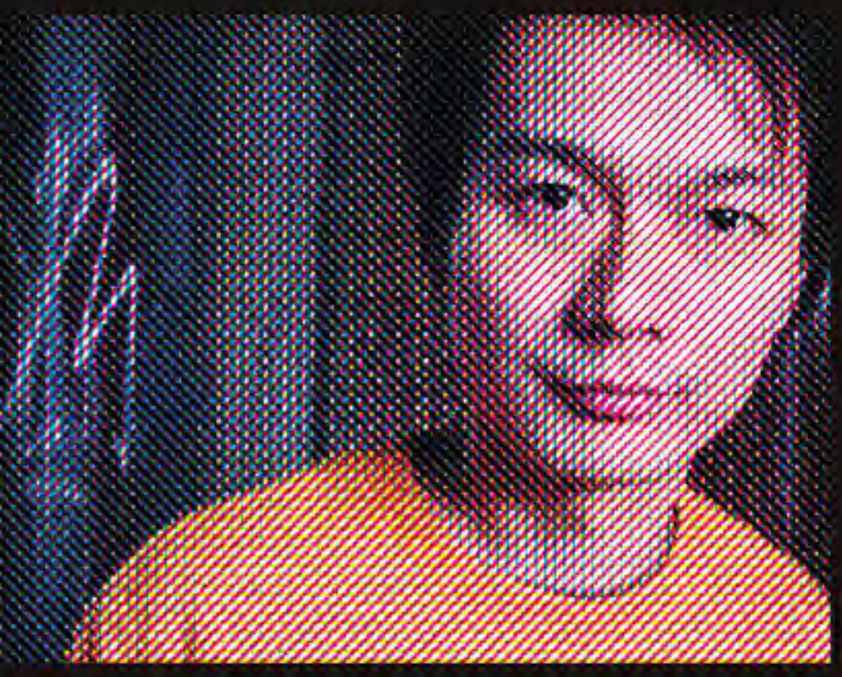
The festival was largely programmed in 25-minute slots, and within this structure most acts chose to present one piece that focused upon a single idea rather than pursuing its development. In certain cases this focus was definitely warranted: repetition lay at the heart of Family Underground's glorious Industrial psychedelia and Jazzfinger's primitive, bowed drones. However, perhaps because lo-fi electronic manipulation can result in the repetition of sounds of a certain texture, and noise or skronk without nuances of form can become blurred, it is the exceptions that lodge in the memory. The Vitamin B12 eschewed the stage and gleefully ran amok throughout the theatre, bar and garden, taking the crowd by surprise, as they got to work on a peculiar range of instruments and found objects. Meanwhile, the entirely opposite approach was adopted in Orphan Fairytale's solo set, which was an exemplary demonstration of structured improvisation. Having something of the fairground about it, it began with the brightly-clad Eva van Deuren's backwards flip into a crab form, and developed purposively from a joyful intensity that seemingly morphed mynah birds and space invaders, to something altogether slower and darker, and finally evolved via a clumsy lurch into a sound reminiscent of an off-kilter choir.

Perhaps with their conscious refusal of rock's posturing, many performers had their backs to the audience, or allowed long hair to shield them from our gaze, which results in a curious anti-performance: we watch when, in fact, there is nothing to see. Edinburgh duo Usurper seemed alert to this: they settled themselves in front of the stage and produced an intimate set that allowed us to view the unfolding dynamics of their improvisation as they played (in both senses of the word) with stones and balloons, and even incorporated the squeak of their sneakers on the wooden flooring. Berlin's Raionbashi and Kutzkelina also attended to the performative, beginning with some selfconscious on-stage delay in which he drank vodka from a plastic cup whilst she plaited her long blonde hair and then wound it carefully around her head. Finally, stepping up to the spotlit mic, Kutzkelina placed her hands on her hips and let rip with some perfectly astonishing yodelling; delayed, looped and treated by Raionbashi, it built powerfully into a siren wail.

Ultimately, it was the vocalists who provided the festival highlights. A visibly frail Henry Chopin, now 85, struggled upright from his wheelchair to deliver a plosive verbal performance, at times probing his clothing with the mic, while seemingly conducting his own efforts with a preternaturally extended forefinger. On another occasion, the stage was massed with Phil Minton's Feral Choir. The name suggests those half wild urban creatures – canny urban foxes, aggressive seagulls or scabby pigeons under railway bridges – and the group, who had come together during an afternoon workshop, seemed wholly animal as they murmured, shrieked and ululated to each other, with Minton acting as pack leader to their motley colony. Later, Dutch composer/sound poet Jaap Blonk, having begun with a thoughtful text on the very act of listening, went on to put his gymnastic vocals through their paces, culminating in an engaging work for "cheek synthesizer". His spirited performance appeared to leave most of the audience grinning with delight, an image that summed up this good humoured festival.

JOANNE LEE

WXXV



Aki Onda



Michael Gira



Terre Thaemlitz



Laub



Bernhard Günther



Han Bennink



Vooredoms



Rafael Toral



The Wire & ELECTRA in association
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THE WIRE 25

A month-long season of new music events at venues across London celebrating *The Wire* magazine's 25th birthday

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BOREDOMS present VOREDOMS in-the-round + MICHAEL GIRA
Shoreditch Town Hall,
380 Old St, EC1
Fri 26 Oct, 8pm, £15

SOFT PINK TRUTH + STRATEGY + REANIMATOR + SOUL JAZZ DJs
The Rocket,
166–220 Holloway Rd, N7
Sat 27 Oct, 8pm, £8

MATMOS + LAUB
Bush Hall,
310 Uxbridge Rd, W12
Sun 28 Oct, 8pm, £12

THE SOUND OF THE EXQUISITE CORPSE
Drop-in studio workshops hosted by HEX OUT TAPES
Toynbee Studios,
28 Commercial St, E1
Sundays 28 Oct to 18 Nov inclusive, 2–6pm,
performances at 5:30pm, FREE

RESONANCE RADIO ORCHESTRA
In association with RESONANCE 104.4FM
Arts Theatre,
6–7 Great Newport St, WC2
Mon 29 & Mon 5 Nov, 8pm
£5, www.resonancefm.com

CINEMA FOR THE EYES AND EARS
Classic short avant garde films curated by Mark Webber
Roxy Bar & Screen,
128–132 Borough High St,
SE1
Tues 30 Oct, 8pm, FREE
www.roxybarandscreen.com

LYDIA LUNCH: *AN EVENING AT THE HANGOVER HOTEL*
St Giles-in-the-Fields,
60 St Giles High St, WC2
Thurs 1 Nov, 7:30pm, £8

JOHN WALL & L GAMBLE + CHARLES LINEHAN DANCE COMPANY with HARLASSEN + UNKNOWN DEVICES: THE LAPTOP ORCHESTRA
Finsbury Town Hall,
Rosebery Ave, EC1
Sat 3 Nov, 7pm, £8

PYMATHON + TOMUTONTTU (JAN ANDERZEN) + LAU NAU + KUUPUU
In association with NO.SIGNAL
Bush Hall, 310 Uxbridge Rd, W12
Sun 4 Nov, 7pm, £8
www.no-signal.net/wire25

ATLANTIC WAVES:TERRE THAEMLITZ + ERIKM + ANTHONY PATERAS + TIM HECKER + AKI ONDA + TINA FRANK + RICHARD CHARTIER + more
In association with ATLANTIC WAVES, London International Festival of Exploratory Music
ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts),
The Mall, SW1
Fri 9, Sat 10, Sun 11 Nov
7:30pm, £15/night
www.atlanticwaves.org.uk
tickets: www.ica.org.uk

SAVAGE PENCIL: NEW DRAWINGS, SCULPTURE, PRIMER ILLUSTRATIONS
In association with 96 GILLESPIE GALLERY
96 Gillespie Rd, N5
Sat 10 Nov to Sun 9 Dec
(open Thurs–Sun),
2–6pm, FREE,
www.96gillespie.com

SUNNY MURRAY + JOHN TCHICAI + HAN BENNINK with SPRING HEEL JACK + JOHN EDWARDS + ORPHY ROBINSON
Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Sq, WC1
Mon 12 Nov, 8pm, £12

THE ROAD TO WHO KNOWS WHERE: *THE SECRET APOCALYPTIC LOVE DIARIES + FOGGY MOUNTAINS BREAKDOWN MORE THAN NON-FOGGY MOUNTAINS*
Film screenings curated by Mark Webber
Roxy Bar & Screen,
128–132 Borough High St,SE1
Tues 13 Nov, 8pm,
FREE
www.roxybarandscreen.com

METADUB SPECIAL: KODE9 & SPACEAPE + THE BUG with FLOW DAN (ROLL DEEP), WARRIOR QUEEN & RICKY RANKING (ROOTS MANUVA) + SKULL DISCO (SHACKLETON live + APPLEBLIM DJ set)
Plastic People,
147–149 Curtain Rd, EC2
Thurs 15 Nov, 9pm, £8

RAFAEL TORAL'S SPACE PROJECT with ROGER TURNER + TRAPIST + KLANGSTAUB (GARY SMITH & BERNHARD GÜNTER) + BO WIGET & LUIGI ARCHETTI
In association with NO.SIGNAL
Bush Hall,
310 Uxbridge Rd, W12
Sat 17 Nov, 7pm, £10,
www.no-signal.net/wire25

JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER + POLLY SHANG KUAN BAND + AXOLOTL + THE SOUND OF THE EXQUISITE CORPSE + PUMAJAW + WEYES BLUHD + BIRDS OF DELAY
In association with UPSET THE RHYTHM
Cargo,
83 Rivington St,
Kingsland Viaduct, EC2
Sun 18 Nov, 3pm, £8,
www.upsettherhythm.co.uk

SONNY SIMMONS with TIGHT MEAT + JOOKLO DUO
Red Rose,
129 Seven Sisters Rd, N7
Mon 19 Nov, 8pm, £8

EXTRAORDINARY LIVES: *BOGMAN PALMJAGUAR + A BALLAD WITH GENESIS P-ORRIDGE AND LADY JAYE*
Film screenings curated by Mark Webber
Roxy Bar & Screen,
128–132 Borough High St,SE1
Tues 20 Nov, 8pm, FREE
www.roxybarandscreen.com

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY's *SCREEN PLAY* with JG THIRLWELL, VICKI BENNETT, ERGO PHIZMIZ, BLEVIN BLECTUM, JANINE ROSTRON, JOHN BUTCHER, STEVE BERESFORD + more:
Bush Hall,
310 Uxbridge Rd, W12
Thurs 22 Nov, 8pm, £12

THE WIRE 25 has been curated by *The Wire* magazine and ELECTRA on the occasion of *The Wire*'s 25th anniversary. For more details on all the events in the season, and to get information on additional events as they are added to the programme, go to www.thewire.co.uk and www.electra-productions.com

Tickets for all events except where stated available from **www.ticketweb.co.uk**

Subscribers to *The Wire* get an exclusive discount on tickets. Just quote your subscriber number and code when ordering at www.ticketweb.co.uk. NB This offer does not apply to the Atlantic Waves events at the ICA

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THE GRAND DIVAS OF FADO • **THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2007** • 7.30pm • £25, £20, £15 • Queen Elizabeth Hall • South Bank Centre • London SE1 • **Tickets:** 0870 160 2512 • www.rfh.org.uk

BEATRIZ DA CONCEIÇÃO UK PREMIERE
MARIA DA FÉ UK PREMIERE
MAFALDA ARNAUTH
ALDINA DUARTE UK PREMIERE
JOANA AMENDOEIRA
RAQUEL TAVARES UK PREMIERE



Atlantic Waves launches this year's festival with a celebration of mesmerizing voices, recreating a Portuguese traditional Grand Fado Night. On offer is a five star line-up featuring three generations of fado divas – legendary singers BEATRIZ DA CONCEIÇÃO and MARIA DA FÉ, prime fadistas MAFALDA ARNAUTH and ALDINA DUARTE, and young talents JOANA AMENDOEIRA and RAQUEL TAVARES. A traditional fado combo of virtuosic players – Ricardo Cruz (double bass), Luis Pontes (classical guitar) and Paulo Parreira (Portuguese guitar) – accompanies all six singers.

PORTUGUESE GUITAR MASTERS • **FRIDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2007** • 7.30pm • £15 • St Giles Cripplegate • Fore Street • Barbican • London EC2 • **Tickets:** 0870 060 0100 • www.ticketweb.co.uk

ANTÓNIO CHAÍNHO UK PREMIERE
CUSTÓDIO CASTELO UK PREMIERE
RICARDO PARREIRA UK PREMIERE



The Portuguese guitar, best known for accompanying fado, makes its UK debut in a leading role by the hand of three of its most respected contemporary players. Revered master ANTÓNIO CHAÍNHO, sophisticated innovator CUSTÓDIO CASTELO and young talent RICARDO PARREIRA demonstrate their variety of approaches to mastering the tear-shaped, 12-stringed instrument.



Each ticket purchased for the GRAND DIVAS OF FADO at Queen Elizabeth Hall, PORTUGUESE GUITAR MASTERS at St Giles Cripplegate or any of the LUSOPHONE CLUB NIGHTS at Cargo includes a copy of the November issue of Songlines magazine with 2 CDs, including the 2007 Atlantic Waves Festival sampler. The magazine will be available to collect on the night of each concert.

SOUNDCLASH LUSOPHONE NIGHT • TUESDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2007 • 8pm • Free before 9pm, £10 afterwards • Cargo • 83 Rivington Street • London EC2 • Tickets: 0870 060 0100 • www.ticketweb.co.uk

MAU MAU
MIXHELL EUROPEAN PREMIERE (LIVE ACT)
STEREO ADDICTION
LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION DOCUMENTARY





Eclectic clubnight featuring top Brazilian DJ MAU MAU playing a set of house/techno mixed to Brazilian beats; ex-Sepultura Iggor Cavalera's new project MIXHELL providing a blend of electroclash, hip-hop, cyber punk and dark rock'n'roll; and Portuguese house/techno duo STEREO ADDICTION. Plus a screening of the documentary LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION by Red Bull Music Academy.

TECHNO/ELECTRO LUSOPHONE NIGHT • WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2007 • 8pm • Free before 9pm, £10 afterwards • Cargo • 83 Rivington Street • London EC2 • Tickets: 0870 060 0100 • www.ticketweb.co.uk

ANDERSON NOISE
ZENTEX UK PREMIERE
PIXEL 82
LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION DOCUMENTARY





A night featuring pioneering Brazilian DJ/producer ANDERSON NOISE, known to Londoners for his stint as a Headstart resident DJ at Turnmills; Lisbon-based Finnish producer Jari Marjamäki under his alias ZENTEX; and London-based Portuguese DJ/producer Filipe Galante aka PIXEL 82. Plus a screening of the documentary LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION by Red Bull Music Academy.

GHETTOTRASH LUSOPHONE NIGHT • THURSDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2007 • 8pm • Free before 9pm, £10 afterwards • Cargo • 83 Rivington Street • London EC2 • Tickets: 0870 060 0100 • www.ticketweb.co.uk

DJ MARLBORO
FREDERIC GALLIANO KUDURO SOUND SYSTEM
MACACOS DO CHINÊS UK PREMIERE
LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION DOCUMENTARY





Ghettotrash clubnight presenting the best in urban lusophone dance music brings shantytown hardcore partying to the heart of London. This electronic carnival-like experience of sensual dancers and contagious sounds brings together raw modern party rhythms from across three continents, featuring baile funk godfather DJ MARLBORO (Brazil); kuduro pioneer FREDERIC GALLIANO KUDURO SOUND SYSTEM (Angola/France); and grime/dancehall combo MACACOS DO CHINÊS (Cape Verde/Portugal). Plus a screening of the documentary LUSOPHONY, THE (R)EVOLUTION by Red Bull Music Academy.

GRAIN OF SOUND NIGHT • FRIDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2007 • 7.30pm • £15, £12.50 members • ICA • The Mall • London SW1 • Tickets: 0207 930 3647 • www.ica.org.uk

RICHARD CHARTIER, SAWAKO, SHINJIRO YAMAGUCHI, JOÃO SILVA WORLD PREMIERE
TERRE THAEMLITZ, MANUEL MOTA, JONAS OLESEN, STILB WORLD PREMIERE
TIM HECKER, SAFE & SOUND, MORPH3U WORLD PREMIERE



Curated by Portuguese record label Grain of Sound, a night of electronic soundscapes and mind stimulating visuals. Innovative collaborations between sound artists RICHARD CHARTIER (USA), SAWAKO (Japan/USA), SHINJIRO YAMAGUCHI (Japan), and video artist JOÃO SILVA (Portugal); TERRE THAEMLITZ (USA/Japan), STILB (Portugal), JONAS OLESEN (Denmark) and guitarist MANUEL MOTA (Portugal); and TIM HECKER (Canada) with SAFE & SOUND (Portugal) and visual artist MORPH3U (Portugal).

CRÓNICA NIGHT • SATURDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2007 • 7.30pm • £15, £12.50 members • ICA • The Mall • London SW1 • Tickets: 0207 930 3647 • www.ica.org.uk

VITOR JOAQUIM, RAN SLAVIN, O.BLAAT, MUD WORLD PREMIERE
@C, AKI ONDA, GERT-JAN PRINS, LIA WORLD PREMIERE
GINTAS K, THE BEAUTIFUL SCHIZOPHONIC, TBA, TINA FRANK WORLD PREMIERE





Curated by Portuguese media label Crónica, a night of experimental electronica and digital visuals featuring innovative encounters between VITOR JOAQUIM (Portugal), RAN SLAVIN (Israel), Keiko Uenishi under her alias O.BLAAT (Japan/USA), and Otolab's MUD (Italy) on video; @C (Portugal), AKI ONDA (Japan/USA), GERT-JAN PRINS (Netherlands), and LIA (Austria) on video; plus GINTAS K (Lithuania), THE BEAUTIFUL SCHIZOPHONIC (Portugal), TBA (Georgia/Germany) and TINA FRANK (Austria) on video.

SIRR NIGHT • SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2007 • 7.30pm • £15, £12.50 members • ICA • The Mall • London SW1 • Tickets: 0207 930 3647 • www.ica.org.uk

JASON KAHN, ERIKM, JOHN GRZINICH, PAULO RAPOSO WORLD PREMIERE
ANTHONY PATERAS, MANU HOLTERBACH, KENNETH KIRSCHNER, PEDRO CARNEIRO WORLD PREMIERE
ACHIM WOLLSCHEID, MARC BEHRENS, ERIC LA CASA, ANDRÉ GONÇALVES WORLD PREMIERE



Curated by Portuguese record label Sirr, a celebration of experimental music, sound art and phonography, with JASON KAHN (USA/Switzerland), ERIKM (France), JOHN GRZINICH (USA/Estonia) and PAULO RAPOSO (Portugal); ANTHONY PATERAS (Australia), MANU HOLTERBACH (France), KENNETH KIRSCHNER (USA) and PEDRO CARNEIRO (Portugal); ACHIM WOLLSCHEILD (Germany), MARC BEHRENS (Germany), ERIC LA CASA (France) and ANDRÉ GONÇALVES (Portugal).

All ICA events are In association with The Wire 25, The Wire magazine's 25th birthday season

Resonance104.4fm

CONTAMINATION

Sunday 28 October. Produced for "Radia" by Knut Aufermann and Sarah Washington. A four hour live broadcast, 7pm – 11pm, as part of ASCR Radiophonic Festival 2007, www.acsr.be

HECTIC PEELERS

6 November. An Electric Sheep/Resonance FM screening night, Roxy Bar and Screen, 128 – 130 Borough High Street SE1, www.roxybarandscreen.com, www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk

USAGE & ABUSAGE

Resonance FM All-stars: two nights of new comedy and spoken word
Basement, Arts Theatre, 6-7 Great Newport Street, WC2
Monday 12 November, 8pm, £5, www.artstheatrelondon.com
And Monday 19 November, 8pm, £5, www.artstheatrelondon.com

NO MUSIC DAY

Wednesday 21 November: celebrate No Music Day with our schedule of delightfully music-free broadcasts, www.nomusicday.com

TIGHT PUDDING

Tuesday 27 November, Richard Thomas hosts a night of vaudeville entertainments and harmless noises, Ryans, 181 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16.

GREEN AND PLEASANT LANDS

Wednesday 28 November, Tam Dean Burn presents a special day of broadcasts dedicated to William Blake on the 250th anniversary of his birth.

AUTUMN SCHEDULE

Our autumn schedule includes
Adventures in Modern Music with The Wire, Thursdays, 9pm – 10.30pm
Artrocker Radio with Artrocker Magazine, Mondays 5pm – 6.30pm
Audition with Alastair Wilson, Sundays 7pm – 8.30pm
BPM with Benedict Drew, Wednesdays 1pm – 2pm
Counter Culture with Rough Trade Shops, Thursdays 12noon – 1pm
Flo Motion with Nick Luscombe, Saturdays, 8pm – 9pm
The Glass Shrimp with Egghole Collective, Mondays 9pm – 10.30pm
Late Lunch with Out To Lunch, Wednesdays, 2pm – 3pm
The Organ Radio Show with Sean & Marina, Sundays 10pm – 11pm
Sound Projector with Ed Pinsent, Fridays 5.30pm – 7pm
And
The Clear Spot with someone different every time, weekdays, 8pm – 9pm

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NOVEMBER

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14	READING FEZ	0870 4448666
15	LONDON KOKO	0870 145 1115
16	COVENTRY KASBAH	024 7655 4473
17	GLASGOW KING TUTS	0870 169 0100
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15	MANCHESTER ACADEMY 3	0161 832 1111
16	BIRMINGHAM BAR ACADEMY	0870 771 2000

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October

Thu	25	Brighton Tru Club	01273 709 709
Fri	26	Dublin Ambassador	0818 719 300
Sat	27	Manchester Warehouse	SOLD OUT
Sun	28	Leeds University	0113 380 1342
Wed	31	Glasgow Academy	0141 418 3015

November

Thu	1	London Koko	0870 400 0688
Fri	2	Liverpool Nation	0161 832 1111
Sat	3	Newcastle Secret Location	08700 600 100

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November
1 London 93 Feet East
2 Cardiff Qbar
3 Manchester Robot Soap @ Urbis
6 Liverpool Korova
7 Edinburgh Cabaret Voltaire
9 Aberdeen Snafu

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digitalism live

NOVEMBER

12	Oxford Zodiac	01865 420 042
13	London Scala	0870 400 0688
14	Brighton Concorde 2	01273 673311
15	Birmingham Barfly	0870 907 0999
17	Manchester Warehouse Project	0161 832 1111
18	Bristol Clockwork	0870 444 400
19	Newcastle Academy 2	0870 771 2000

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UK TOUR

NOVEMBER

TUE 27TH
LONDON, GRAMAPHONE

WED 28TH
COVENTRY, THE TIN ANGEL

THU 29TH
MANCHESTER, CAFE SAKI

FRI 30TH
LIVERPOOL, THE ZANZIBAR

DECEMBER

SAT 1ST
BRISTOL, THE CRYPT

SUN 2ND
CHELTENHAM, MEANTIME ARTS SPACE

MON 3RD
NOTTINGHAM, TBC

TUE 4TH
COLCHESTER, ARTS CENTRE

WED 5TH
BRIGHTON, THE ALBERT

FRI 7TH
LONDON, THE RED ROSE W/ SPRING HEEL JACK

SAT 8TH
MINEHEAD, ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES*

*TEAM BRICK ONLY

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score

Häxan: Witchcraft Through The Ages

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Sat 10th November
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Friday 16 – Sunday 25 November 2007
londonjazzfestival.org.uk
bbc.co.uk/radio3

Festival highlights:

Saturday 17 November
JON HASSELL
+ MAARIFA STREET
Queen Elizabeth Hall
Newly signed to ECM Records composer/trumpeter Jon Hassell is the visionary creator of a style of music he describes as Fourth World, a mysterious, unique hybrid of music both ancient and digital, composed and improvised, Eastern and Western.

Monday 19 November
TUXEDOMOON
Purcell Room
San Francisco legends make a very rare London appearance with their new live multimedia project.

Tuesday 20 November
FLAT EARTH SOCIETY
Purcell Room
From the ashes of X-Legged Sally and Maximalist! come this extraordinary cult band.

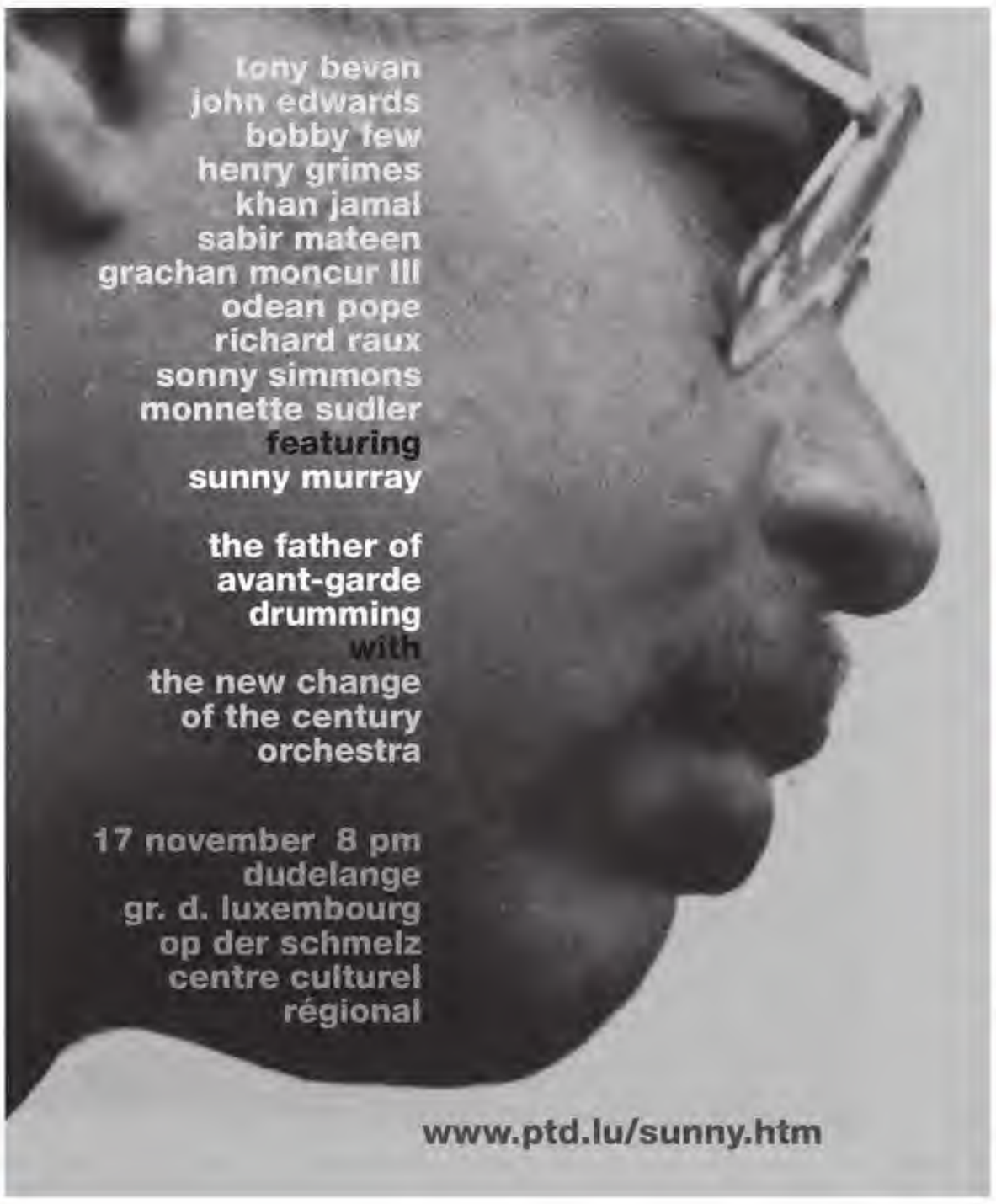
Thursday 22 November
ARKADY SHILKLOPER
Purcell Room
A special project from Russian multi-instrumentalist and member of the Moscow Art Trio. Part of the Russian Act Festival 2007.

Sunday 25 November
ADVENTURES IN SOUND
Purcell Room
Expect the unexpected as downtown New York meets cutting edge London, featuring **Gutbucket** and **Tom Arthurs** with special guests still to be announced.

Southbank Centre
Queen Elizabeth Hall
Purcell Room
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For a FREE copy of the Festival brochure call the BBC Radio 3 Information Line on 08700 100 300

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Friday 18 January – Sunday 20 January

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Forest

The Voice of Desire

Songs from the Exotic

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woman.life.song

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Five days of electroacoustic and live electronic music, improvisation, music theatre, audiovisual screenings, talks and workshops

Highlights include:

Tuesday 20 November
The New Art of Sound
Joseph Anderson (USA) & Matt Ingalls (USA)

Wednesday 21 November
Multichannel Tape Music
Festival selection of works by Irish composers

point . light . sound .
Sounds meet visuals at an abstract junction
Audiovisual screening - selection from international call for works

Sounds Connected
Interactive music concert, featuring Oeyvind Brandtsegg (Norway), Matt Ingalls (USA), Lioba Petrie (Ireland), Iain McCurdy (Northern Ireland), among others

Thursday 22 November
Sounds Electric '07 Electroacoustic Music Competition
Concert of shortlisted works for tape and live electronics by Gordon Delap

Electric Poetry
"Beowulf and Grendel" for narrator and live electronics by Gordon Delap

Videomusic
The work of Jean Piché (Canada)
Audiovisual multiple screen concert

Friday 23 November
Music for Percussion and Computer
Pedro Carneiro, Percussion
Featuring works by Paul Wilson, João Pedro Oliveira, Javier Alvarez, and others

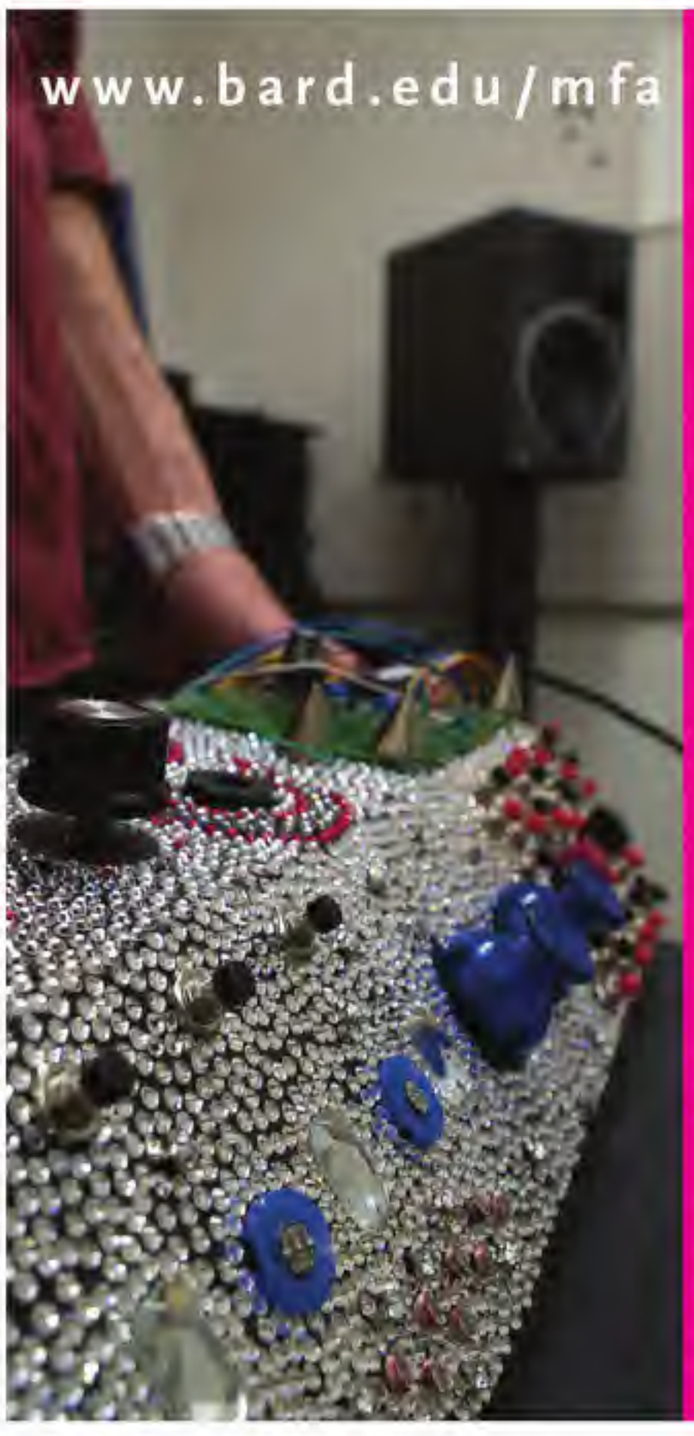
Friday & Saturday 23 & 24 November
Manos Tsangaris - Small Festival Suite
Music theatre miniatures
Featuring EAR ensemble with special guests Manos Tsangaris, Thomas Meixner, Stefan Meyer, Sylvia O'Brien, members of Spiral Staircase theatre company, and many more

Presentations of academic papers on electroacoustic composition as well as talks and workshops by invited guest artists throughout the week

Please visit **www.ear.ie** **www.soundselectric.org**

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Oct 29th **Nantes** *Festival Soy**
Oct 30th **Paris** *Les Instants Chavirés*
Oct 31st **Saarlouis** *Juz*
Nov 1st **Darmstadt** *Oetinger Villa**
Nov 2nd **Aalst** *Kc Netwerk**
Nov 3rd **Hasselt** *Kc Belgie**
Nov 5th **Manchester** *Ruby Lounge*
Nov 6th **Oxford** *Wheatsheaf*
Nov 7th **Bristol** *The Croft*
Nov 9th **Leeds** *Holy Trinity Church*
Nov 11th **Coventry** *Taylor John's House*
Nov 12th **Newcastle** *the Cluny*
Nov 13th **Edinburgh** *venue t.b.c.*
Nov 15th **Gothenburg** *Club Nefertiti*
Nov 16th **Aarhus**
Nov 17th **Oslo** *Spasibar*
Nov 18th **London** *Cargo Wire Magazine Festival*
Nov 20th **Tampere** *Vastavirta*
Nov 21th **Helsinki** *Kuudes Linja*
Nov 22nd **Turku** *Dynamo*
Nov 24th **Stockholm** *Fritz Corner*
Nov 25th **Malmo**
Nov 26th **Copenhagen**
Nov 27th **Berlin**
Nov 28th **Koln** *Kulturbunker*
Nov 29th **Amsterdam** *VPRO Session*
Dec 1st **Padova** *Unwound*
Dec 2nd **Vittorio Veneto** *Spazio M AVV*
Dec 6th **Roma** *Init*
Dec 11th **Marina di Massa** *Tagomago*

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More TBA

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London Koko

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GIO.8
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VEN.9
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SAB.10
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GUEST: PITCH
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SAB.17
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MAR.20
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C/O TEATRO RASI
GOWNS
CARLA BOZULICH
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+JIM WHITE(DIRTY THREE)
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OCTOBER
Tuesday 30: GLASGOW, The Arches

NOVEMBER
Thursday 1: SHEFFIELD, Corporation
Friday 2: MANCHESTER, Dulcimer
Saturday 3: STOCKTON ON TEES, Georgian Theatre
Sunday 4: HULL, The Adelphi
Monday 5: LEEDS, Brudenell Social Club
Wednesday 7: LONDON, 93 Feet East
Thursday 8: COVENTRY, Taylor Johns House
Friday 9: BRISTOL, Cube Cinema
Saturday 10: CHELTENHAM, Meantime Arts Space
Sunday 11: FALMOUTH, Miss Peapods, Penryn
Monday 12: RINGMEAD, South Hill Park Arts Centre
Tuesday 13: COLCHESTER, Arts Centre

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Sunday November 18th
7.30 pm £7
Acid Mothers Temple and The Melting Paraiso
U.F.O. + Diagonal + JG Thirlwell DJ set

Monday November 19th
7.30 pm £8
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+ Chinwag

Wednesday November 21st
7.30 pm £5
Baba Yaga's Hut presents
live acts tbc

Wednesday November 28th
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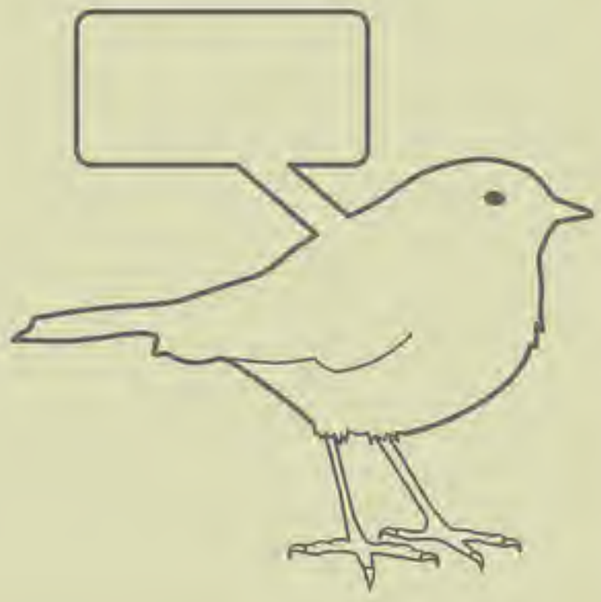


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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events and clubs. Send info to *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK. Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Lisa Blanning

The Wire 25

A month-long season of new music events at venues across London to mark *The Wire* magazine's 25th anniversary...

Boredoms present Voredoms + Michael Gira
An exclusive 'in the round' performance of V∞redoms, performed for the first time outside of the host group's native Japan, plus an acoustic 'busking' set by the Young God label owner and former Swans frontman. London Shoreditch Town Hall Assembly Hall, 26 October, 8pm, £15

Soft Pink Truth + Strategy + Reanimator + Soul Jazz DJs
Matmos's Drew Daniel's outrageous solo party machine grooves alongside two of Portland, Oregon's finest electronica units, both part of the Community Library roster: analogue House from label head Strategy and dirty beatz courtesy of Reanimator. With the Soul Jazz label's infamous 100% Dynamite DJs. London Rocket, 27 October, 8pm, £8

The Sound Of The Exquisite Corpse
A temporary studio set up by Brighton's Hex Out Tapes in which members of the public can drop in and jam along with a library of existing tracks from a variety of international Improv/noise artists to create an ever evolving new piece of music. All jamz will be recorded and the process will later be documented in a book and compilation. No experience necessary! London Toynbee Studios, Sundays 28 October–18 November, 2–6pm with a live performance at 5:30pm (final 18 November performance at Cargo: see below), www.myspace.com/hexouttapes

Matmos + Laub
Kaleidoscopic new wyrd electronica from San Francisco and Berlin in a special seated performance. London Bush Hall, 28 October, 8pm, £12

Resonance Radio Orchestra
Two performances, titled *Underground 1 & 2*, from Resonance 104.4 FM's resident orchestra, which draws from a pool of two dozen musicians, artists, writers and actors. London Arts Theatre Basement, 29 October & 5 November, 8pm, £5, www.resonancefm.com

Bernhard Günter



Cinema For The Eyes And Ears
A programme of classic short avant garde films that explore the potential for combining radical notions of image and sound. The films feature soundtracks by Brian Eno, Rhys Chatham, John Cale and Terry Riley. Curated by Mark Webber. London Roxy Bar & Screen, 30 October, 8pm, free, www.roxybarandscreen.com

Lydia Lunch: *An Evening At The Hangover Hotel*
UK premiere of the New York performance artist and musician's biopic *Video Hysteries*, followed by a Q&A session with Ms Lunch, who will then give a performance of her new live work, *Hangover Hotel*. London St Giles-in-the-Fields, 1 November, 7:30pm, £8

Charles Linehan Dance Company & Harlassen + John Wall & L Gamble + Unknown Devices
A special performance from the acclaimed UK choreographer and his troupe in collaboration with a group led by UK sound artist Richard Skelton (aka Harlassen), plus a rare live performance by digital composer John Wall with L Gamble, and David Toop's new digital Improv orchestra. London Finsbury Town Hall, 3 November, 7pm, £8

Pymathon + Tomutonttu + Lau Nau + Kuupuu
A no.signal production for *The Wire* 25 featuring four of the heaviest groups from Finland's psych folk community. London Bush Hall, 4 November, 7pm, £8, www.no-signal.net/wire25

Atlantic Waves
Three nights in conjunction with London's International Festival of Exploratory Music featuring exclusive audiovisual collaborations from Richard Chartier/Sawako/Shinjiro Yamaguchi/João Silva, Terre Thaemlitz/Manuel Mota/Jonas Olesen/Stilb and Tim Hecker/Safe & Sound/M0rph3u (9 November), Vitor Joaquim/Ran Slavin/o.blaat/Mud, @c/Aki Onda/Gert-Jan Prins/Lia and Gintas K/The Beautiful Schizophonic/Tina Frank (10), Jason Kahn/eRikm/John Grzinich/Paulo Raposo, Achim Wollscheid/Marc Behrens/Eric La Casa/André Gonçalves and Anthony Pateras/Manu Holterbach/Kenneth Kirschner/Pedro Carneiro (11). London ICA, 7:30pm, £15, www.ica.org.uk, www.atlanticwaves.org.uk

Savage Pencil: New Drawings, Sculpture, Primer Illustrations
An exhibition and solo show for *The Wire*'s resident cartoonist and illustrator featuring a wide range of new and commissioned work. London 96 Gillespie Gallery, 10 November–9 December, free, www.96gillespie.com

Sunny Murray + John Tchicai + Han Bennink + Spring Heel Jack + John Edwards + Orphy Robinson
A unique coming together of three pioneers of US free jazz and Euro Improv with the cream of the UK's current free music players. London Conway Hall, 12 November, 8pm, £12



Savage Pencil exhibition

The Road To Who Knows Where
Film screenings, curated by Mark Webber, of two fragmented and dysfunctional road movies: Jessie Stead's *Foggy Mountains Breakdown More Than Non-Foggy Mountains*, a cryptic album of weird and wonderful versions of Flatt & Scrugg's bluegrass standard; and *The Secret Apocalyptic Love Diaries* of Enid Baxter Blader, a windswept folk-poem shot on a homemade video camera. Both cast a discreet nod of recognition to Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*. London Roxy Bar & Screen, 13 November, 8pm, free, www.roxybarandscreen.com

Metadub Special: Kode9 & Spaceape + The Bug with Flow Dan, Warrior Queen & Ricky Ranking + Shackleton + Appleblim
Showcase for some key players operating on the wilder fringes of London dubstep, with live sets from Kode9 & Spaceape, The Bug plus MCs, plus a rare new live set from Skull Disco's Shackleton and a DJ set from label partner Appleblim. London Plastic People, 15 November, 9pm, £8

Rafael Toral's Space Project with Roger Turner + Trapist + Klangstaub + Bo Wiget & Luigi Archetti
A no.signal production for *The Wire* 25 with a live performance from Portuguese sound artist Toral in collaboration with UK Improv percussionist Turner, plus Austrian trio Trapist and the Klangstaub duo of Gary Smith & Bernhard Günter. London Bush Hall, 17 November, 7pm, £10, www.no-signal.net/wire25

Jackie-O Motherfucker + Polly Shang Kuan Band + Axolotl + The Sound Of The Exquisite Corpse + Pumajaw + Birds Of Delay + Weyes Bluhd
An Upset The Rhythm production for *The Wire* 25, an underground all-dayer featuring Portland's free rock collective, Brighton's violent femmes, new trance music from San Francisco's Axolotl and more. London Cargo, 18 November, 3pm, £8, www.upsettherhythm.co.uk

Sonny Simmons with Tight Meat + Jooklo Duo
An ultra-rare opportunity to see the great US saxophonist, a true legend of free jazz thanks to his early ESP-Disk sides, here performing with Tight Meat's free music radicals plus support from US sax 'n' drums combo Jooklo Duo. London Red Rose, 19 November, 8pm, £8

Extraordinary Lives
Screenings, curated by Mark Webber, of two new underground biopics: Luke Fowler's *Bogman Palmjaguar* is a portrait of its namesake, a former patient of radical psychologist RD Laing who now lives a hermetic life in the Scottish Highlands. The images are accompanied by Lee Patterson's field recordings. Genesis P-Orridge and Lady Jaye are the subjects of Marie Losier's diary/documentary *A Ballad With Genesis P-Orridge And Lady Jaye*, which pursues the pandrogynous partners at home, and on tour with Thee Majesty and Throbbing Gristle. London Roxy Bar & Screen, 20 November, 8pm, free, www.roxybarandscreen.com

Christian Marclay: *Screen Play*
A combination video piece and live performance directed by Christian Marclay himself and featuring three musical ensembles (Vicki Bennett & Ergo Phizmiz, Steve Beresford/John Butcher/Roger Turner and Blevin Blectum/JG Thirlwell/Janine Rostron) each interpreting a special visual score. London Bush Hall, 22 November, 8pm, £12,

The Wire 25 is co-curated by *The Wire* and ELECTRA in association with Contemporary Music Network. Subscribers to *The Wire* can get exclusive discounts on tickets to events in the season. For details go to www.thewire.co.uk.

Tickets for all events except where stated available from www.ticketweb.co.uk.

UK Festivals

Atlantic Waves
LONDON
London's international festival of exploratory music returns with 22 concerts in eight days featuring the Grand Divas of Fado (1 November), Portuguese guitar masters (2), DJ Mau Mau, Mixhell (6), Anderson Noise, Zentex (7), DJ Marlboro, Frédéric Galliano Kuduro Sound System (8) and three nights of experimental audiovisual electronica in conjunction with *The Wire* 25 (see previous page). London various venues, 1–11 November, times/prices vary, www.atlanticwaves.org.uk

Audioscope
OXFORD
Annual one day festival in aid of the homeless charity Shelter, featuring Michael Rother & Dieter Moebius, Dälek, The Sea And Cake, Shit And Shine, Rothko and others. Oxford Carling Academy, 10 November, 1:30–11pm, £15/£14, 01865 813500, www.audioscope.co.uk

Aurora
NORWICH
Four day international festival of animation, live performance and installation featuring digital film manipulators Semiconductor and circuit bending from The ZX Spectrum Orchestra, among others. Norwich Arts Centre, 7–10 November, www.norwichartscentre.co.uk

Eggstock
LEICESTER
Pickled Egg Records' tenth anniversary celebration with Fulborn Teversham, Nalle, The Big Eyes Family Players, Dragon Or Emperor, Zukanican, Now, aPAtT, Black Carrot, Suzy Mangion and The Doozer. Leicester Phoenix Arts Theatre, 10 November, 2–11pm, £15/£13, www.pickled-egg.co.uk

Fertilizer
LONDON
Showcase for a range of French creative music with Emilie Simon, Barbara Carlotti, Gong Gong, Klub Des Loosers, David Walters, Babet, Klima and Pierre Bastien. London various venues, 15–22 November, www.fertilizerfestival.com

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival
HUDDERSFIELD
30th year for this event dedicated to contemporary and experimental music with composer in residence Yannis Kyriakides, Charlemagne Palestine, Alvin Curran, The Nieuw Ensemble, MAE & Robert Ashley, Evan Parker, Rhodri Davies & Ko Ishikawa and more, plus an extension of Sonic Arts Network's Cut & Splice festival. Huddersfield various venues, 16–25 November, www.hcmf.co.uk

London Jazz Festival
LONDON
Annual expansive festival orbiting the world of jazz with Cesaria Evora (17 November), Sonny Rollins (24), John Surman (24) and many others. London various venues, 16–25 November, www.londonjazzfestival.org.uk

Sound Festival
ABERDEEN
Fred Frith, Evelyn Glennie, Damon & Naomi, Elysian Quartet, Black Lips. Aberdeen various venues, 27 October–28 November. www.sound-scotland.co.uk

Thrill Jockey At 15
UK
A day and night at London's Koko celebrating the label's 15th year with The Fiery Furnaces, Trans Am, The Sea And Cake, Califone, Arbouretum, Daniel AIU Higgs, Radian, The Zincs (11 November, 2pm, £18); Tortoise, Bobby Conn, Adult, KTL (12, £17.50). www.thrilljockey.com

Unsafe 3
POOLE
Safehouse's third annual event for improvised music with Couple In Spirit (Keith & Julie Tippett), Steve Noble & Alex Ward, Matt Davis & Mark Wastell, plus experimental films accompanied by Jan Kopinski & Steve Harris, Tracktonic, The Typographer's Error and more. Pool Lighthouse, 9–10 November, times/prices vary, www.lighthousepoole.co.uk


Damon & Naomi

International Festivals

All Frontiers
ITALY
Free music from Marc Ribot, Keiji Haino, Peter Brötzmann, Frances-Marie Uitti and more. Gradisca D'Isonzo Sala Civica Bergamas, 9–11 November, free, www.moremusic.it

Avanto
FINLAND
Eighth edition of this festival, with Michael Snow and Peter Kubelka presenting their works as well as rare films. Organ, Pain Jerk, Tape, Eddie Prévost & Alan Wilkinson, Volcano The Bear, Kuupuu, Avarus and more play live. Helsinki various venues, 16–18 November, www.avantofestival.com

Cimatics
BELGIUM
Festival celebrating audiovisual art and VJing. Brussels Beursschouwburg, 22–24 November, www.cimatics.com

Club To Club
ITALY
Seventh edition of this electronic music and arts festival with Mika Vainio, William Basinski, XXL (Xiu Xiu and Larsen), Jeff Mills, Digitalism and more. Turin various venues, 8–10 November, www.clubtoclub.it

The End Of The Weak
GERMANY
Two days of noise in Berlin with Junko, Mattin, Philip Best/Consumer Electronics, Taku Unami and more. Berlin various venues, 2–3 November, www.mattin.org/endweak.html

Gender Bender
ITALY
Festival dedicated to the shifting perception of the body, gender and sexual orientation. Sylvano Bussotti's *RARA*, cinema retrospective with works by Andy Warhol, Derek Jarman and others, plus dance, talks, parties and a body art exhibition. Bologna various venues, 30 October–4 November, www.genderbender.it

Pauze
BELGIUM
(K-RAA-K)-produced festival of experimental music with Eliane Radigue, Volcano The Bear, Noah Howard Quartet, Climax Golden Twins, Acid Mothers Temple and more. Ghent various venues, 29 November–1 December, €22/festival pass, www.kraak.net

Risonanze
ITALY
A month of contemporary music concerts with The Magic Id (8 November), Larry Ochs Sax & Drumming Core (13), Nurse With Wound (24–25) and more. Venice Teatro Fondamenta Nuove, www.teatrofondamentanuove.it

Sounds Electric
IRELAND
Live electronic music, improvisation, audiovisual screenings, talks and workshops. With Matt Ingalls, Joseph Anderson, Jean Piché, Øyvind Brandtsegg, Thomas Meixner, Sylvia O'Brien, EAR Ensemble, Spiral Staircase Theatre Company and more. Dundalk Institute of Technology Blackbox Theatre, 20–24 November, times/prices vary, www.ear.ie

Tampere Jazz Happening
FINLAND
Rashied Ali Quintet, Polar Bear, Matthew Shipp Trio, Jack deJohnette's Ripple Effect, Sten Sandell Trio, Trio Braam DeJoode Vatcher and others. Tampere various venues, €110–80/festival pass, www.tampere.fi/festival/music

Umbrella Music
USA
Celebrating Chicago improvised music with a few European guests. Cor Fuhler, Peter Evans, Mat Maneri, Kevin Drumm, Iva Bittova, Irène Schweitzer, Jeb Bishop, Michael Zerang, Daniel Carter, Axel Dörner, Fred Longberg-Holm and others. Chicago various venus, 1–5 November, www.umbrellamusic.org

Unlimited 21
AUSTRIA
Ben Goldberg Quintet, Carla Bozulich, Ellery Eskelin/Jim Black/Andrea Parkins, John Butcher & Gino Robair, Marina Rosenfeld, Kürzmann/Tilbury/Dafeldecker/Wishart, Wu Fei and more. Wels Schlachthof, 9–11 November, €68–€50, www.musicunlimited.at

Why Note
FRANCE
Contemporary groups presenting programmes of 20th and 21st century works. Including works by John Cage, a portrait of Tom Johnson, Ensemble XXI, The Percussions Of Strasbourg and more. Dijon various venues, 15–25 November, www.whynote.com

Special Events

Analog Live!
USA
A real-time presentation of works centred around the revival of analogue synthesis with a collaborative performance from Gary Chang, Alessandro Cortini, Richard Devine, Peter Grenader, Chas Smith, Thighpaulsandra and Paul Tzanetopoulos. Los Angeles CalArts Theater, 16 November, 8:30pm, $20–$10, www.ear-group.net/analoglive1.html

Berlin: Improvised Symphony Of A City
UK
A screening of Walter Ruttman's 1927 film *Berlin: Die Sinfonie Der Grosstadt* with a live improvised soundtrack by The Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra with guests Axel Dörner and Winnie Brückner. Glasgow CCA, 21 November, 8pm, £8/£6, www.cca-glasgow.com

Keiji Haino
JAPAN
The caped one plays an entire set of gamelan instruments preceded by a lecture. Osaka University of Art, 24–25 November, 3pm & 2pm, free, music-reference.net

Häxan: Witchcraft Through The Ages
UK
Screenings of the 1922 occult classic with live soundtracks by Geoff Smith (Bradford Pictureville Cinema, 27 October) and Gravenhurst spinoff Bronnt Industries Kapital (with support from Portland's Grouper, Bristol Pro Cathedral, 10 November)

Daniel Higgs
UK
Exhibit of new and old paintings and drawings by the artist, musician and former Lungfish vocalist. London 96 Gillespie, to 4 November, www.96gillespie.com

Daniel Johnston
UK
Alt.gallery's second exhibition supported by *The Wire*, It's A Beautiful Life features the first ever UK retrospective of Johnston's drawings, tape covers and 7" sleeves spanning the period from 1981–2006. Newcastle alt.gallery, to 10 November, www.altgallery.org

Okkyung Lee with Andrew Lampert
USA
The cellist teams up with film maker and archivist Lampert for two nights of musical and visual presentation. With Cornelius Dufallo Trevor Dunn and Miguel Frasconi. New York

Kitchen, 9–10 November, $10, www.thekitchen.org

Sunny Murray & The New Change Of The Century Orchestra
LUXEMBOURG
Free jazz drumming luminary in a four day residency workshop with 11 friends including Henry Grimes, John Edwards, Tony Bevan, Khan Jamal and Sonny Simmons. Dudelange Centre Culturel Régional, 14–17 November, 00 352 5161 21290, www.dudelange.lu/culture

No Programme
UK
A call to rethink culture by activist music collective Ultra-red, with sound installations exploring contemporary experiences of migration, racism and inclusion, while reading groups, talk shops among other events invite people to come to their own definitions of culture, participation and democracy. Plymouth Arts Centre, to 11 November, www.plymouthac.org.uk

Operations Of Sound
UK
Sound artist John Wynne and photographer Tim Wainwright present a site-specific surround-sound work, developed in collaboration with staff and patients during a residency at Harefield Hospital. London Old Operating Theatre Museum, 30 November–15 December, www.thegarret.org.uk

Relay
UK
Seven newly commissioned sound installations and text works including Ed Osborn's *Swing Set*. Brighton Friese Greene Gallery, 2 November–21 December, www.finetuned.org

The Stars In Us All
UK
Immersive sound installation by Neil Webb. Sheffield Bloc, 3–18 November, 0114 272 3155, www.blocspace.co.uk

On Stage

Barry Adamson
The former Bad Seed and Magazine bassist debuts his new album. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 20–21 November, 7:30, £20/£15

Acid Mothers Temple
Bristol Thekla (8 November), Birmingham Hare & Hounds (9), Manchester tba (10), Liverpool Magnet (11), Galway Roisin Dubh (12), Cork Crane Lane Theatre (13), Dublin tba (14), Belfast tba (15), Glasgow Stereo (15), London Corsica Studios (18)

Akron/Family
Brooklyn psyched-out folk quartet. Brighton Pressure Point (24 November), Bristol Croft (25), Aberdeen Lemon Tree (27), Glasgow Beat Club (28), Newcastle Other Rooms (29), Manchester Phoenix (30), Leeds Faversham (1 December), London Cargo (2), Nottingham Social (4), Coventry Taylor John's House (5)

Axolotl + Mark Morgan
The San Francisco violinst tours with Sightings guitarist Morgan. Brighton Greenhouse Effect (19 November), London Old Blue Last (21, with Astral Social Club + Blood Stereo), Newcastle Retreat (22, with Sonny Simmons & Tight Meat)

Guy Barker
Compositions inspired by Mozart. Barnstaple Queen's Theatre, 7:45pm, £16.50

Steffen Basho-Junghans
The German guitarist makes an appearance. Coventry Tin Angel (11 November), Sheffield Red House (23), Manchester Fuel (24), Sowerby Bridge Vine (25), Leeds Packhorse (27), London Fleapit (1 December)

The Chap
North Londoners return with their flea market disco. Bristol Cube (2 November), Glasgow Admiral Bar (4), Aberdeen Electric Boutique (5), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (7), Manchester Cafe Saki (8), Coventry Taylor John's (9), London Corsica Studios (11), Southampton Soul Cellar (23)

Circle
Finnish psych-rockers. Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (26 November), London Corsica Studios (with Guapo, 28)

Tony Conrad
Non-London appearance for the drone violinist. Northampton Fishmarket, 10 November, 7pm, £15/£10, 01604 639090

Dälek
Hiphop heaviness. Oxford Academy (10 November), Leeds Brudenell (11)

Damon & Naomi
The sad hits-producing duo are joined by Michio Kurihara and Bhob Rainey for this tour. Aberdeen Lemon Tree (22 November), Glasgow Stereo (23), London Scala (with Sunburned Hand Of The Man, 25)

Ludovico Einaudi
The pianist and composer performs with Robert and Ronald Lippok. London Royal Albert Hall (7 November), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (8), Northampton Royal & Derngate (11)

Nancy Elizabeth + Thee, Stranded Horse
Double-headline tour of kora and kim harp. Sheffield Corporation (1 November), Manchester Dulcimer (2), Stockton On Tees Georgian Theatre (3), Hull Adelphi (4), Leeds Brudenell Social Club (5), London 93 Feet East (7), Coventry Taylor John's House (8), Bristol Cube (9), Cheltenham Meantime Arts Space (10), Falmouth Miss Peapods (11), Ringmead South Hill Park Arts Centre (12), Colchester Arts Centre (13)

Flying Lotus
West Coast hiphop producer on tour. London Gramaphone (7 November), Manchester Mint Lounge (9), Leeds Faversham (16), London Cargo (17), Nottingham Dogma (22), Glasgow Sub Club (23), London 3rd Bass (24)

Goodiepal + Lawrence English
The Danish performer and the Australian electronic composer plus Alexander Thomas. Bristol Cube Cinema, 30 November

Davy Graham
The seminal guitarist of English folk blues continues his return. Leeds City Varieties (18 October), Leicester Y Theatre (20), Liverpool LIPA Paul McCartney Auditorium (21), Milton Keynes Stables (23), Birmingham Glee Club (24), Worcester Huntingdon Hall (25), Glasgow Royal Concert (27), Gateshead Sage (29), Salford Lowry (30), Wycombe Town Hall (31)

Paul Hession/David Keenan Duo
British free jazz duo of sax and drums. Sheffield Red House (27 October), London Old Blue Last (29), Brighton Zuma (30, with Dylan Nyoukis), Coventry Taylor John's House (31), Leeds Fenton (1 November, with Mick Flower)

Imaginary String Trio
Phil Wachsmann, Dominic Lash and Bruno Guastalla. London Ivy House (18 October), Cheltenham University of Gloucestershire (19), London Red Rose Club (21), Oxford Jacqueline du Pré Music Building (26), Birmingham Lamp Tavern (30), Reading Rising Sun Arts Centre (3 November)

Jackie-O Motherfucker + Pumajaw
Portland's free rock jammers on tour with Glasgow's multi-instrumental, folk-psych song duo. Manchester Ruby Lounge (5), Oxford Wheatsheaf (6), Bristol Croft (7), Leeds Holy Trinty Church (9), Coventry Taylor John's House (11), Newcastle Cluny (12), Edinburgh tba (13), London Kings Head (16, Pumajaw only), London Cargo (18, *The Wire* 25)

Jesu
Maximum heaviness from Justin Broadrick's new project. Sheffield Corporation (15 November), Glasgow Oran Mor (16), Leeds Cockpit (17), Birmingham Medicine Bar (18), Bristol Cooler (19), London Scala (20)

Manorexia
JG 'Foetus' Thirlwell reworks his music for string quartet, laptop and tuned percussion. Support from Stargazer's Assistant, Alexander Tucker and Simon Fisher Turner. London St Giles In The Field, 21 November, 7:30pm, £8

The Necks
Uniquely cyclical improvisations from this Australian trio. Belfast Festival (2 November), Limerick University (3), London Vortex (4–5), Leeds Wardrobe (6), Edinburgh Lot (7)

The Offshoot with Tim Berne
The New York saxophonist joins improvising quintet led by bassist Simon Fell. Newcastle Cluny (21 November), London Vortex (22)

Pocket
A single launch party for John Bisset and Alex Ward's new group with support from Odes (featuring Blurt's Ted Milton and Sam Britton from Icarus). London Marquee Club, 13 November, 7pm, £6/£4

Polar Bear
Manchester Matt And Phreds (7 November), Leeds College of Music (8), Sheffield Millennium Hall (9), Coventry Taylor John's (10), Milton Keynes Stables (13), Sleaford Terry O'Toole Theatre (15), Swansea Taliesin Arts Centre (17), London Corsica Studios (19), Norwich Arts Centre (24)

Pram
Birmingham pop experimentalists. Cambridge Man In The Moon (16 November), Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (18)

Steve Reid Ensemble
Featuring Kieran Hebden plus The Heritage Orchestra. London Barbican, 20 November, 7:30pm, £20–£10

S&M
Improvising duo of Simon Bradley on cello and Mark Webber on electrics. Liverpool Wolstenholme Gallery (26 October), London Boat-Ting (5 November), London Stage B (6), Newcastle Star & Shadow Cinema (23), Leeds Fenton (26)

Janek Schaefer
Turntable soundscapes. Bath University ICIA, 24 November, 7:30pm, £9/£5

si-cut.db & Rod Thomas
Digital soundscapist Douglas Benford and folk disco songwriter Rod Thomas perform intimate songs and evocative soundtrack experiments, with support solo sets by each artist. London Roundhouse (4 November), London ICA (15)

Sonny Simmons with Tight Meat
David Keenan and Alex Neilson's sax and drums gets a new bassist (George Lyle) and

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School of Music, University of East Anglia, Norwich
Monday 26 November 2007
Sonic Arts 48
Six Easy Pieces : Jason Dixon (after Richard Feynman). For cello, bass clarinet, oboe/cor anglais, tape, electronics, animations and narrator. Featuring Apartment House.
Jason Dixon's Six Easy Pieces are based on the book of the same name by physicist Richard Feynman. The six pieces are drawn from the set of lectures Feynman delivered to undergraduate students at Caltech in an attempt to get them interested in theoretical physics.
Concert Room, School of Music, University of East Anglia 7.30pm
Tickets: £6, Concessions £4.50, Students £3



Astral Social Club at Below The Radar, Porto

plays with free jazz sax legend Sonny Simmons. Plus support from underground outfit Jookla Duo. London Red Rose Club (19 November, *The Wire* 25), Bristol Cube (20), Cambridge Portland Arms (21), Newcastle Retreat (22), Glasgow tba (23)

Sonic Arts 48
UEA's concert series of electroacoustic music with Jason Dixon's *Six Easy Pieces* for cello, bass clarinet, oboe/cor anglais, tape, electronics, animations and narrator. Norwich University of East Anglia School of Music Concert Room, 26 November, 7:30pm, £6–£3

Speaker's Corner
British rap and spoken word combine in a music theatre piece curated by Don Letts exploring the legacy of the slave trade. Artists include SkinnyMan, Mad Flow, Decifer, Malika Booker, RT, Yusra Warsama and Shane Solanki. London Deptford Albany (8–10 November), Leicester Peepul Centre (13), Bracknell South Hill Park (14), Huddersfield Lawrence Bailey Theatre (22), London Tottenham Bernie Grant Arts Centre (23), Birmingham Town Hall (30), Manchester Contact (1 December)

Sunburned Hand Of The Man
London Old Blue Last (3 November), Cardiff tba (4), Bristol Croft (5), Cambridge tba (6), Manchester tba (8), Newcastle tba (9), Glasgow tba (10), Edinburgh tba (12), London Scala (25, with Damon & Naomi)

Stars Of The Lid
Living drones. Brighton tba (20 November), Bristol Redland Park Church (21), Manchester Urbis (25), London Luminaire (26)

Surgeon + Sleeparchive
With Vex'd, Mark Broom, Rob Hall, Pinch and Remarc. Leeds West Indian Centre, 17 November, £10

Team Brick + Colorir
Bristolian one-man band teams up with Brazilian multi-instrumentalist. London Gramaphone (27 November), Coventry Tin Angel (28), Manchester Cafe Saki (29), Liverpool Zanzibar (30), Bristol Crypt (1 December), Cheltenham Meantime Arts Space (2), Nottingham tba (3), Colchester Arts Centre (4), Brighton Albert (5), London Red Rose (7)

Terrastock Tea Party
With Richard Youngs & Alex Neilson Duo, Motorghost and Team Brick. Bristol Cube Cinema, 3 November, £7/£6

Tomutonttu + Kuupuu
Freaky folky Finns, with support from Dylan Nyoukis and Hobo Sonn. Brighton Fitzherberts, 5 November, 8pm, £4

SÉBASTIEN AGNETTI

Tongues Of Fire
Saxophonist Tim Hill's freewheeling quartet. Reading Rising Sun Arts Centre, 10 November, 8:30pm, £7/£6

UNKLE
James Lavelle, DJ Shadow and friends play Nottingham Rock City (12 November), Glasgow ABC (13), Manchester Academy (15), London Roundhouse (16)

Wilco
Country-tinged rock with the fabulous Nels Cline on guitar. Manchester Academy (2 November), Birmingham Academy (4), Brixton Academy (5)

Jozef van Wissem + Nalle
The Dutch lutenist with Glasgow's psych-folk trio. London ICA, 7 November, 8pm, £7–£5

Club Spaces

Boat-Ting
Boat on the Thames hosting Lol Coxhill/John Edwards/Steve Noble and special guest Kay Grant, Terry Evanson/Are Kolbeinsen, S&M Combo and Madrigal & Metcalfe (5 November), Luke Barlow Band, Bemass featuring Sten Sandell/Bela Emerson/Magnus Anderson, Ricardo Tejero Quartet and Zolan Quobble (19). London Yacht Club, every first and third Monday of the month, 8pm, £6/£4, 020 8659 3406

Club Integral
Return of the music series with Boycott Coca Cola Experience, Ellen Mary McGee, Jack Shirt, Umi Hara Calkwell, plus a lecture on British avant garde film by Duncan Reekie. London Canterbury Arms, 1 November, 9pm, £5

Free Radicals
Concerts for established and emerging improvisors with Alan Wilkinson/Eddie Prévost, Yedo Gibson/Marcio Mattos/Mark Sanders, Angeline Conaghan/Are Lothe Kolbeinsen/David Leahy/Javier Carmona/Terje Evensen. London Red Rose, 7 November, 8pm, £5/£3

Freenoise Monthly
Concert series of far out sounds. Live music from Damo Suzuki, Gated Community and The Tajalli Vortex. Sheffield Bar Abbey, 15 November, 8pm, £5

Frimp
Ongoing free Improv night with regular trio Paul Dunmall/Bruce Coates/Trevor Lines joined by guitarists Han Earl Park & Jamie Smith. Birmingham Victoria, 1 November, 8pm, £6/£4

Klinker North
London free music institution with Bert Shaft Orchestra (2 November), Hunting Lodge (16) and a special 25th anniversary celebration with Madrigal & Metcalfe, Harry Merry, Vaseline Towers + Sir Gideon Vein (30). London Salisbury Hotel, first & third Fridays monthly, 10pm, £5/£3

Klinker South
Normal Gimber, Terje Evensen & Are Kolbeinsen (8 November), Chris Woltman + Fuck Off Batman (22). London Ivy House, second & fourth Thursdays monthly, 8:30pm, £5/£3

Klinker Stoke Newington
One True Dog, S&M Combo, Terje Evensen & Are Kolbeinsen (6 November), Audrey Chen, Phil Minton, Jamie Harris & Trevor Watts (13), Skip, Veryan Weston & Hugh Metcalfe (27). London Maggie's Bar (formerly Stage B), every Tuesday, 9pm, £5/£3

On The Edge
Improvised and experimental music from Extended trombone player Alan Tomlinson, The Safehouse 'Wildcard' Ensemble and Han-Earl Park on guitar. Brighton Open House Pub, 28 November, 8:30, £5/£4, 0844 999 6335

Rational Rec
Third season for this inter-art social, now at the South Bank with new work by live artist Marcia Farquhar, Plus Minus Ensemble performing Andriessen's *Workers Union*, an experimental film programme and more. London Queen Elizabeth Hall foyer, 10 November, 7:30pm, £5

Ray's Jazz
Monthly free improvisation series continues with The Guillemots songwriter and frontman Fyfe Dangerfield playing an improvised piano set. London Ray's Jazz at Foyles, last Thursday monthly, 29 November, 6pm, free, 020 7440 3205

Re:sounds
New experimental sonic arts night with Matthew Olden, Thomas Gardner and Andy Keep. Bath University ICIA, 2 November, 7:30pm, £7/£3

Slightly Off Kilter
New season with improvised sounds from Nos Phillipe, Daniel Jones, Paul Khimasia Morgan and David Papapostolou. Brighton West Hill Hall, 10 November, 8pm, £4

Spirit Of Gravity
Experimental club this month celebrating Electro-Acoustic Month with music from Bemass, Dan Powell and Same Actor. Brighton Marlborough Theatre, 20 November, 8:30pm, £4/£3

Under_Score
Techno monthly with Andy Vaz, Jim Petherwick, Luke Malcher and Placid. Bristol Tube, 3 November, 10pm, £4

Whitechapel Late Night Fridays
Weekly twilight adventures in music, performance and art sponsored by *The Wire*. The Diamond Family Archive (2 November), Grouper, Daniel Higgs & Chiara Giovando (9), Where The Wild Things Are (16), It's About Time (23), The Bicycle Thieves (30). London Whitechapel, every Friday, 7–11pm, £6–£3

Incoming

Below The Radar: Outsider Sounds From The UK
PORTUGAL
For the second year running *The Wire* decamps to Porto's Casa Da Musica venueto host a night of outsider sounds from the UK. Featuring Astral Social Club, John Wall & L Gamble, Infinite Livez; plus DJ interventions from Skull Disco's Appleblim. Porto Casa da Música, 1 December, www.casadamusica.com

Out There items for inclusion in the December issue should reach us by Friday 2 November

LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL 2007

BALTIC

BALTIC MUSIC PROUDLY PRESENTS:

Sunday 18 November 2007

6:30
Zhenya Strigalev's "FINDAMORALE"

8:45
Charles Gayle Trio
with Gerald Benson, and Michael Wimberly

Monday 19 November 2007

6:30
The Til Trio: Mark Sanders, John Coxon, and Steve Beresford

8:45
Marcin Masecki * solo piano performance

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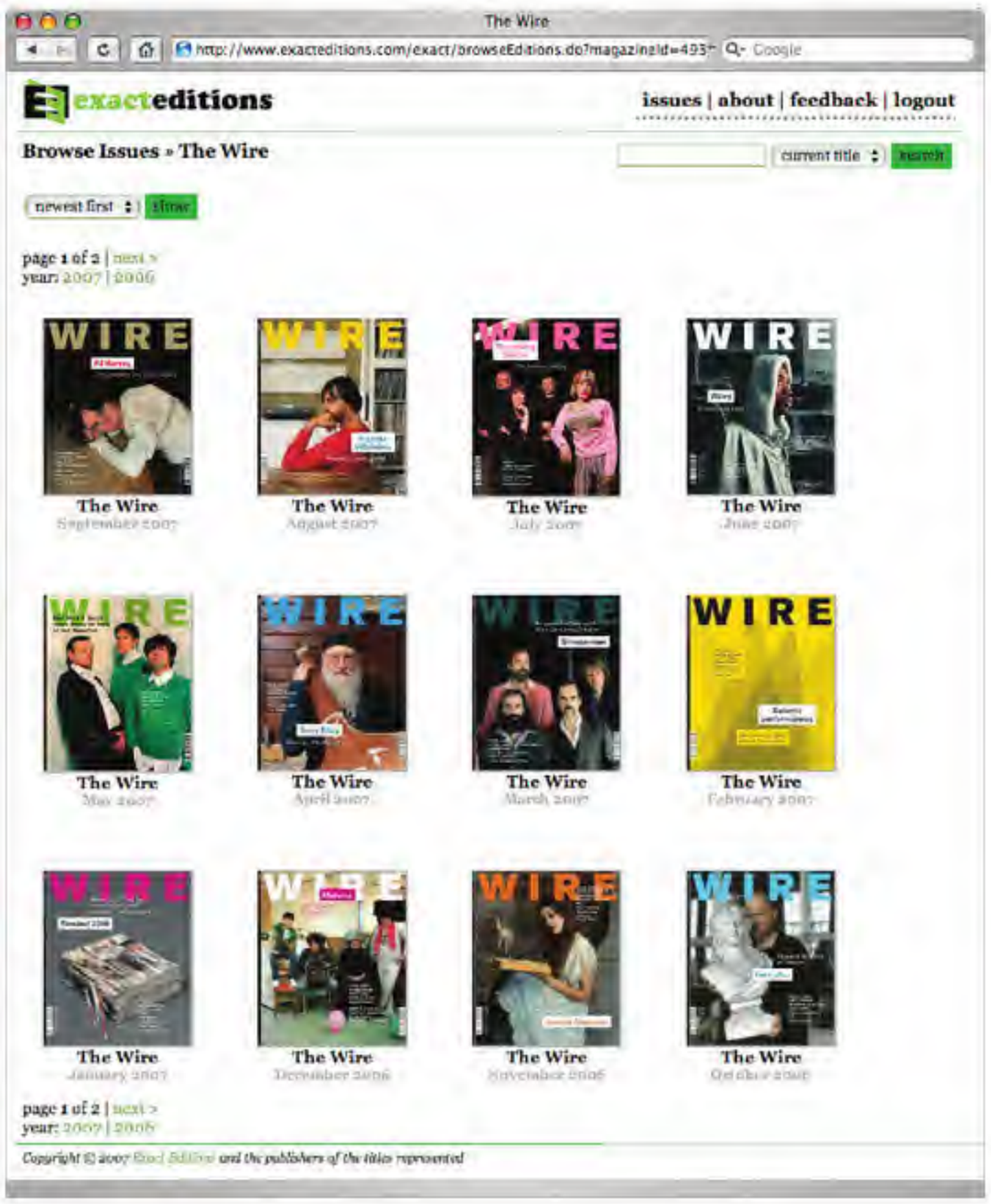
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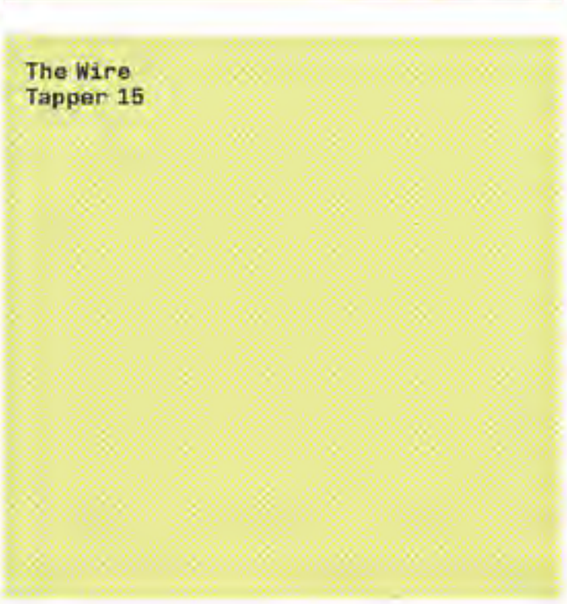
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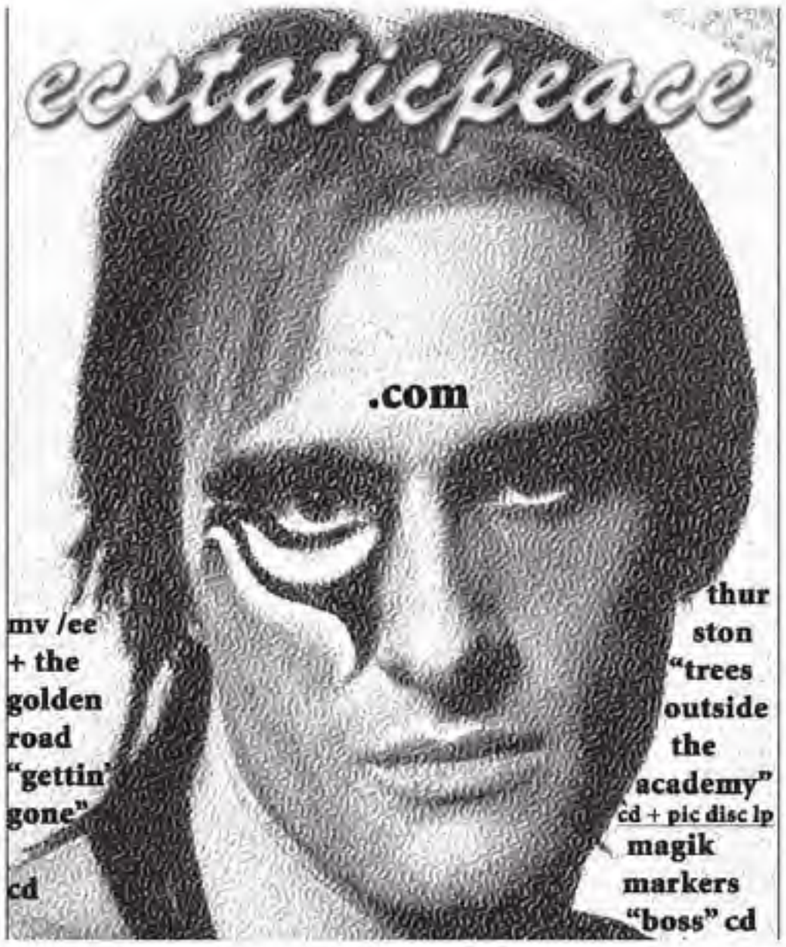
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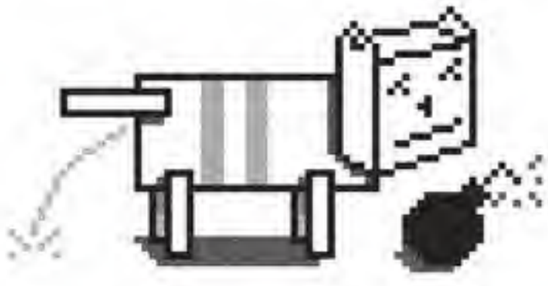
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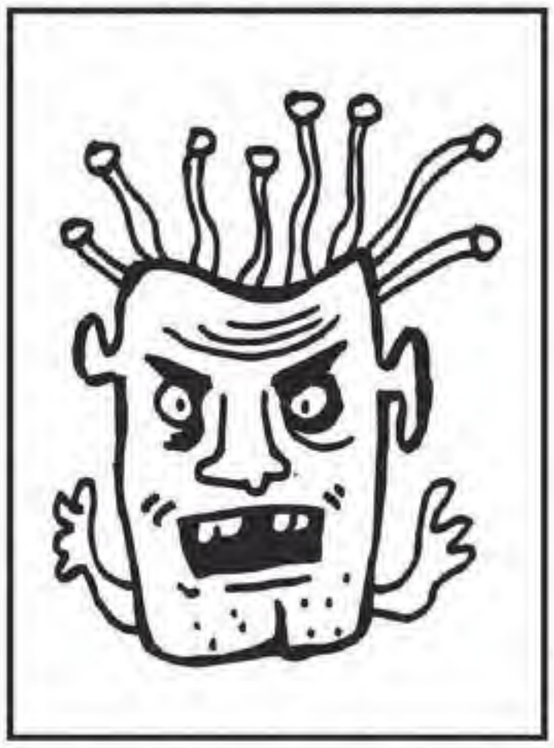
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Epiphanies

Recoiling from the heavenly power of gospel music, Howard Mandel reverses onto Cloud Nine to a Harpo Marx tune



Cosmic joker: Harpo Marx

I may burn at the stake for political incorrectness, but it's the truth: I have an aversion to gospel music. Not revulsion, hatred or bigotry, but intense antipathy, like an allergic reaction of distinct unease.

I respect gospel as the ultra-influential, hyper-signifyin', community based and star-launching manifestation of that great Western cultural wellspring African-American musical tradition, but remain unmoved. OK, some of the music's history, usually in context with the civil rights movement, sweeps me up. But I will never play a recording of gospel music to satisfy a musical need or desire, and gospel's purest, most earnest manifestations especially repel me. So I expose myself to gospel mostly as a journalist, to know what's there, and as a liberal, to reject no art, while remaining distant from its satisfactions. My distaste dates to a haunting childhood vision.

Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, a powerful Chicago based icon of black America when I was growing up in the 1950s and early 60s (and to her death in 1972) had a face that beamed like sunshine and opened up as she sang as if to swallow the void. I remember at age four or five once staring transfixed at her enormous visage seeming to engulf the television screen, as she sang on what may have been a daily 15 minutes on a local network before noontime children's shows. She terrified me, eyes narrowing into slits above her apple cheeks, lips quivering with a message of pure faith in God's will and hopes of being drawn to His bosom (cue organ tremolo). Her ampleness took on a density like the monolith's in Stanley Kubrick's yet-to-be-made *2001*. She was staunch and compelling, her voice crashing over my barely defended self, threatening like a wave with fierce undertow to pull me in.

I resisted. I had no desire to meet my 'Maker', deity and death being overwhelming concepts. And anyway, her faith was not mine. About religion I knew that my family was Jewish and Christ not my saviour, though he'd probably been a good guy. I hadn't yet struggled with my religious identity; this incident might have impelled me to do so.

Because then there was the clown.

I can see him still, though I can't imagine where he came from. A wacky, red-nosed, flame-haired, chalk-faced clown in a baggy polka-dot jumpsuit and ridiculously elongated shoes running on from offstage, stomping as if superimposed on the image of Mahalia, rushing up to the camera then veering off, soles flapping, the entire episode gaining a surreal, scary air. I liked clowns, usually found their anarchic energies hilarious, but this one was an agent of chaos goosed up to supernaturality. Overlaid upon Mahalia's avowed embrace of personal annihilation, the clown represented death as a grinning madman. This compound apparition, whether I saw or imagined it, has ever since influenced my response to the gospel sound.

I lived then in an almost-integrated neighbourhood on Chicago's South Side. Children of all races attended my kindergarten, which didn't strike me as strange. There were different peoples on Earth, and different peoples generated different musics. I'd heard the drama of the Russian composers, the romance of Mexican rancheros, the oblique percussive accents of Chinese opera, the grit of urban doo-wop, hop of jigs and bounce of polka. Not much liturgical music, no temple choir, but when a large chorus wearing sombre robes cropped up in a World War Two-era movie musical, I suffered something like the same feeling Mahalia and the clown gave me, an urge to flee and a fear of being smothered or consumed.

This reaction is controllable, however subjective, but it has reared up repeatedly, so I have seldom lingered long, for instance, in Gospel Tent at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, where The Five Blind Boys Of Alabama and Dorothy Love Coates have proffered The Word. Not *my* word, I tell myself, listening long enough to get an impression of an act and file it away. Sam Cooke came out of The Soul Stirrers, but I dig him starting with "You Send Me". Aretha Franklin's a child of her father's church, but my thrall subsides when she gets religious. I found The Five Blind Boys most rousing as narrators of Oedipus in the Lee Breuer-Bob Telson opera *The Gospel At Colonus*. Thank Ray Charles for having secularised/sexualised gospel tropes – and I'm not against passion, in soul, jazz, rock, whatever. Passion is good, grounded in the here and now. It's unshakable faith in spirits, not *spirit*, that's unnerving and antagonising when it becomes evangelic. In fact, the more fervent the belief, the less I appreciate it.

Great gospel music must be founded in true belief, and I do not doubt Mahalia Jackson's sincerity. But I'm struck, as when hearing Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan or cantorial music outside of a synagogue, that her performances are not intended for artistic or entertainment purposes. I like the attitude of the late 'Georgia Tom' Dorsey, Jazz Age pianist to Bessie Smith and Tampa Red as well as composer of "Precious Lord" and many staples of gospel repertoire, interviewed for *Living Blues* in the 70s. He explains he got religion in 1921, but kept it to himself. Sensing the end of 'race records', he foresaw that getting church choirs to compete and supplying them with sheet music was an economically sound alternative.

Recently I went to New York's Museum of Television and Radio seeking seeds of my gospel aversion, like evidence that Mahalia Jackson ever shared screentime with a malevolent clown. When Mahalia guest-starred on several 50s and 60s TV variety programmes, she was always treated with respect bordering on reverence. She sings superbly – "Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho", "When The Saints Go Marching In", whatever. She is as homey, in chats with hosts, as her jazz contemporary Ella Fitzgerald. I didn't find a clip of her with a rampaging Bozo, though Harpo Marx, one of my favourite madcaps, guested on the same *Kraft Music Hall* show.

That programme from 1959 features Mahalia singing "Somebody Bigger Than You And I", testimony to *"Who made the mountains"*, accompanied by unseen organ and female choir before a set of arches in deep shadows. Then host Milton Berle introduces the silent Harpo, whose curls spill from under his squashed stovepipe hat, his string tie, checked shirt, artist's frock and baggy pants bespeaking vaudeville. Harpo gives Berle his knee instead of his hand to shake, and makes funny faces behind his back. There's more folderol – then he sits down behind his harp to pluck out "Tenderly".

It's a cloying ballad, but Harpo performs straightfaced and truly tenderly, raptly, ending with deft arpeggiations – presumably what angels play on clouds near God. As his notes decay, he looks beatific, as he usually did when not pulling outsized objects from inside coat pockets, honking a horn and chasing skirts. As happy as a loon, a crazy fool, a musician channelling the cosmic joke.

I loved his character, even as a little kid, for his mischief, war on pieties and unfailing protection of true love from veniality and pomposity (see *A Night At The Opera* and *A Day At The Races*). I'm not saying his harp playing is the musical equivalent of Mahalia Jackson's singing – he's simply an uproarious personification of Pan, a god as significant to doubters and naysayers as the power of Christ is to the Believer, through song. Harpo, with clownish innocence, attains the same saintliness ascribed to Mahalia Jackson and her kin. No offence to singers or fans of expressly religious music, but Harpo and the other satirical, skeptical Marx Brothers are the ones with the gospel for me. □

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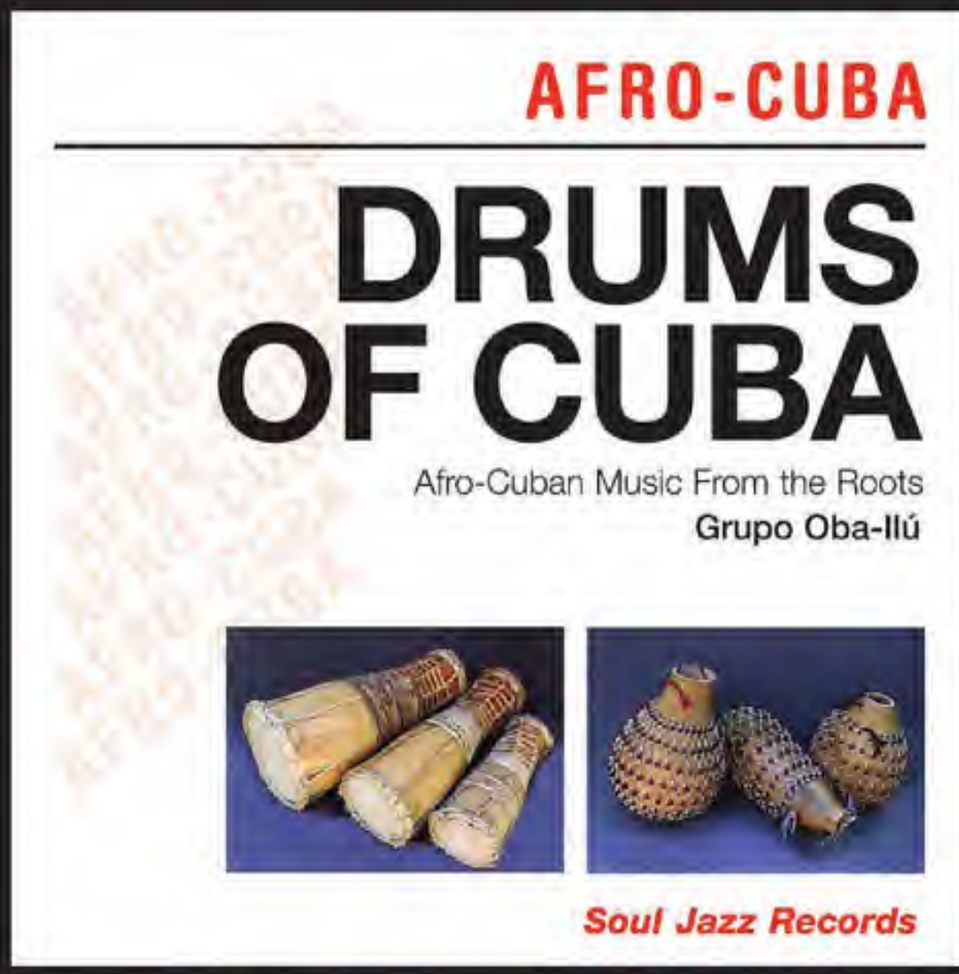
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